

## DRAMA

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## CONTENTS

| Volume II                             | November, 1959                   | Number 3 |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------|
| The Two Queens in <i>Hamlet</i> ..... | Donald Hugh Dickinson            | 106      |
| Mirror for Mobs: the Willie           |                                  |          |
| Stark Stories.....                    | Leonard Casper                   | 120      |
| The Poetry Recital.....               | Reverend Raymond Roseliep        | 125      |
| Reason and Faith as Seen by           |                                  |          |
| Graham Greene.....                    | Reverend Thomas A. Wassmer, S.J. | 126      |
| Arthur Broke: Elizabethan             |                                  |          |
| Dissembler.....                       | John J. McAleer                  | 131      |
| The Current Theatre.....              | Euphemia Van Ransselaer Wyatt    | 141      |
| Drama Bookshelf.....                  |                                  | 144      |
| NCTC Contact Placement Service.....   |                                  | 150      |

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## THE TWO QUEENS IN HAMLET

By DONALD HUGH DICKINSON

*OSRIC: Look to the Queen there, ho!*

*Hamlet* raises questions about its hero, and also about the hero's mother. But where she is concerned, the questions are of a different kind. Why, for example, in a cast of vivid characters, do Queen Gertrude's features seem curiously blurred? Why, in "the busiest of all plays," has she (considering her importance) remarkably little to do? Why does one feel baffled in locating the mainsprings of her conduct and in defining her motives? Not because of the difficulty of choosing from an overwhelming amount of evidence, as in Hamlet's case; but rather because of the little there is to go on. Confronted with the richness of Hamlet's character, one can say that he is many kinds of men, and adduce evidence in support. Yet, oddly enough, when faced with the character of Gertrude, lacking as it is in any comparable sense of richness, one finds it hard to say what kind of woman she is. Why?

It is as if Shakespeare's imagination and creative power, so prodigal and striking in the conception and execution of Hamlet's character, had proved unequal to the demands made on them to conceive and portray a woman who would be adequate both to the situation with which the tragedy begins and to its ensuing action. The implication is that Queen Gertrude somehow should be other than she is—more vivid, more active, perhaps more intricately motivated. There seems to be awareness of such a lack, in Una Ellis-Fermor's comments, when she writes:

In Gertrude's speech there are remarkable few images, and those generally colourless and drawn almost entirely from commonplace themes. They have little vigour and hardly ever call up a vivid picture: the images of a mind that has never received sharp or deep impressions, that is, in fact, incapable of any imaginative effort.<sup>1</sup>

As description, this is true enough. But it sounds uncomfortably like special pleading; it begs the question of vividness, however ingeniously it rationalizes the lack of it. Rebecca West renders a harsher judgment.

The Queen is one of the most poorly endowed human beings which Shakespeare ever drew. Very often he created fools, but there is a richness in their folly, whereas Gertrude is simply a stately defective. The whole play depends on her not noticing, and not understanding . . .<sup>2</sup>

1 Una Ellis-Fermor, *The Frontiers of Drama* (London: Methuen, 1946), p. 89.

2 Rebecca West, *The Court and the Castle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), p. 24.

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Harley Granville-Barker held that any character moving in Hamlet's orbit "will tend to turn satellite, moon to his sun"; but also that Shakespeare "can by now, if he will, give his actor matter enough for a vivid sketch of character in fifty words."<sup>3</sup>

Interpreting her character as that of a pretty, charming creature in whose desperate refusal to grow old "the whole tragedy has struck root," he finds her "shallow, amiable, lymphatic . . . an adulteress, cunning enough to deceive her husband." Yet he concedes that, despite her implied importance, she is "drawn for us with unemphatic strokes . . . and has but a passive part in the play's action."<sup>4</sup>

Here is a paradox of playwriting and of the theater: on the stage, even a crashing bore must be entertaining, while still remaining unmistakably a bore; and dullness and monotony must be vividly and variedly dramatized. The playwright cannot plead his purpose as excuse, if the result lacks interest and color. He may draw his characters as mere lay figures, or as two-dimensional or fully rounded, depending on his needs, which are determined by the characters' importance and functions in the play. He may have to de-emphasize his characters; he must certainly control them, in order to subordinate them to the total action. But when they are to be more than supernumeraries, he must make them vivid within the limitations he has imposed.

Although an actress might give her eyeteeth to play Queen Gertrude, I believe the "unemphatic strokes" and the lack of vividness in the drawing of the part are nonetheless true. What I am here concerned with, besides her lack of vividness, are her adequacy to the play as a whole, and the reasons for the "passive part" she plays in the complicated action she has done so much to bring about. If motive and action in particular circumstances constitute character in drama (whether vividly achieved or not), then to determine her character and its adequacy, we must find out what she does and why.

I propose to define Shakespeare's dramatic method in dealing with the Queen by comparing her character as found in the First Quarto<sup>5</sup> with that found in the Second Quarto<sup>6</sup> and the First Folio. This is simply a device for throwing action and motive into greater relief, and for isolating problems of dramatic method with greater clarity. It assumes arbitrarily the validity of all three versions of the play for the purpose at hand. Practically speaking, there are only two Queens. The additions and deletions which distinguish the Second Quarto from the First Folio do not, except for one or two very minor instances, bear directly on the Queen. My final assessment of her character and its treatment, then, will be based on the fusion of the second and last versions that makes up the play as we usually encounter it in modern editions.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Harley Granville-Barker, *Preface to Hamlet* (Dramabook Edition; New York: Hill & Wang, 1957), p. 214.  
<sup>4</sup> *Passim*, pp. 247-248.

<sup>5</sup> Frank G. Hubbard, *The First Quarto Edition of Shakespeare's Hamlet* ("University of Wisconsin Studies," No. 8; Madison, 1920).

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Marc Parrott and Hardin Craig, *The Tragedy of Hamlet: A critical edition of the Second Quarto, 1604* (Princeton: University Press, 1938).

<sup>7</sup> William Allan Neilson and Charles Jarvis Hill, *The Complete Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1942). In sections II and III, all line references, names of characters, and spellings are given as they appear, in the First Quarto. Cf. Hubbard, *op. cit.*

## II

How important is the Queen in the antecedent action, and then in the main action that it bears upon? And how importantly does she figure in each of the two major threads that make up the main action? As I see it, these threads are: 1) Hamlet's reconciliation to life, and 2) his accomplishment of the revenge which his murdered father's ghost has enjoined upon him. T.S. Eliot described *Hamlet* as a play about the effect of a mother's guilt on her son. This is true, but inadequate as a description of the total action. Even when Hamlet has come to some kind of understanding with his mother, and she repents her sins, the revenge plot is not over; Hamlet has not yet succeeded in performing the deed which the logic of the play makes obligatory. The nature of the whole action, then, must be the combined results of his mother's guilt and Claudius' guilt. The King and Queen share the guilt of adultery and incest; Claudius alone, as we find, bears the guilt of murder. Thus, these two characters are distinct, but unified; not only because the murderer has married the adulteress, but also because the effects of their combined guilt weigh upon Hamlet himself. The action seems to indicate that Hamlet cannot complete his revenge until he has come to terms with his mother's guilt; or, in other words, until he comes to some reconciliation with life. In this view, the Queen is of major importance in the antecedent action and in the first thread of the main action; and if, as I think, the second thread cannot be completed before the first has been dealt with, she is of great importance to the second thread—but in a different way.

Yet even in the final and fullest version, the playwright does not dramatize the effect on the Queen of her own guilt to the same degree that he dramatizes its effect on her son. To do so might well prevent the guilt theme and the revenge plot from fusing. Hamlet, being the kind of character he is—razor-keen in his responses to life where his mother is dull, active where she is passive, and deep-rooted in his affections and loyalties where she appears shallow—must react with a sensitivity and a violence consonant with his nature.<sup>8</sup> But no inherent logic in the situation can require mother and son to have the same, or equal, capabilities. His nature is so much greater than hers that they are in no way commensurate; and, in fact, it is this tragic gulf between them which the play demonstrates.

In all versions, Hamlet's melancholia precedes the full revelation of the Ghost in regard to the Queen: his actions and testimony show what effect his mother had had upon him. He scores her "most unrighteous tears" of mourning; he charges her with such lack of feeling as even a beast would not show. He cannot reconcile his picture of her before her widowhood, hanging amorously upon the late King, with her forgetfulness of him as, with "such speed," she now dotes on his brother. To Hamlet, she is the epitome of frailty; and her fault is so devastating to him, a man of deep and lasting affections, that he imputes it to all womankind.

<sup>8</sup> Of characters in novels, Henry James said "their being finely aware—as Hamlet and Lear, say, are finely aware—makes absolute the intensity of their adventure, gives the maximum of sense to what befalls them." Quoted by Robert Gorham Davis, "At the Heart of the Story is Man," in *Highlights of Modern Literature*, ed. Francis Brown (New York: New American Library, 1954), p. 58.

Through ignorance, he has deeply misread his mother's character—a devastating realization for a young man, with a worse revelation still to come. His error thus puts in question his whole experience and judgment of life. Not only can his mother never again be what he had thought her, she has also cast in doubt the validity of his whole past life—the life he shared with her and his adored father, the two persons closest to him until he came to love Ophelia. the Queen's remarriage has cast doubt upon her capacities to love (to love *him*, as well as his late father); and, finally, by her frailty, she has impugned the fidelity of Ophelia's love for him.

Greater than his bereavement, then, is the fact that the huge hinge of parental love and fidelity upon which he was to swing out into life with confidence and trust has torn loose. This profound dislocation of his emotional base has plunged him into melancholia, an overwhelming disillusionment that has stained his very flesh and made him long for chaos and death. It feeds that defect which Hamlet recognizes in himself, a "vicious mole of nature" which, when yoked to the effect of his mother's action, mixes her guilt and his disillusion in a way that corrupts his virtues. Taken together as they must be, they provide an initial situation entirely adequate for what follows.

With the coming of the Ghost and its revelations, the past is even more brutally sundered from Hamlet. The picture of the Queen which the Ghost gives him further blackens her character and increases his disgust of life. For Claudius seduced Gertrude by gifts and her own lawless lust; and the marriage that had been the prop and wonder of Hamlet's youth was, if the Ghost speak true, a mask for the most shameless adultery and hypocrisy. His kingly father, moreover, was not only betrayed by his wife and cuckolded by his own brother, but murdered by a double usurper, who now enjoys Hamlet's father's throne and his mother's bed. If his mother could commit this vileness, might she not also have conspired with her paramour to kill her husband? The Ghost does not vouchsafe him the answer to this, but the dreadful suspicion has been planted. What can he do against this woman, once a beloved mother in whom he reposed all trust, and now a stranger to him, a monster flaunting the consequences of her sins even as she goes through the motions of motherhood? In all versions, it is the same: He must do nothing; he must hold his tongue, though his heart break:

... let not thy heart conspire  
Against thy mother aught; leave her to heaven  
And to the burthen that her conscience bears.      (I.5.65-7)

Surely, all this is enough to overwhelm Hamlet in his bitter isolation and despondency. It makes for such a "viper's tangle" as will knot tightly together his mother's guilt and his motive for revenge. If this reading of the antecedent action and its bearing upon the main plot be granted, the Queen's major importance therein is clearly established. It remains to compare it with her importance in Hamlet's reconciliation to life and in the accomplishment of his revenge.

The First Quarto presents a Queen who, up to her shending in the closet scene, seems to be the same character as the later one—with a single important exception: apparently, she is not only indifferent to the effect on the generality

of her scandalous remarriage, she is also ignorant of its effect on her son. Yet Claudius speaks of Hamlet as the "joy and half-heart" of her life, and she pleads with her son to stay by her instead of returning to Wittenberg. She thus performs the two actions which, with the intervention of the Ghost, make possible the ensuing tragedy.

What are we to make of this woman at first view? She is a provocative character, one with headstrong appetites, yet capable of more than one kind of affection. Her affections, if real, seem nonetheless shallow, since they do not long survive their object. Only the present has any influence on her or any reality for her, it seems. If so, she can easily adjust to present circumstances. For all we know to the contrary, she has in no way changed except in the matter of husbands. As to the effect of her actions on others, she is either obtuse or brazenly heedless. Thus early in the action, hers is not an incredible character. But when Hamlet begins to unpack his heart, when the Ghost's revelations add to our picture of her, her obtuseness passes belief.

In the First Quarto, there are only three sources of significant information about her: Hamlet, the Ghost, and her own words and actions. The latter are so few as to make her enigmatic, even downright incredible. Her "o'erhasty marriage," for example, is not *dramatized*; for much of the play, it is simply a given fact in the initial dramatic equation. Neither she nor Claudius says a word about it, even in private; and we learn nothing of it from others, Hamlet and the Ghost excepted. So little of it is shown, we can only guess the nature of the relationship. This is an unsatisfactory shift: no strong inferences can be drawn; only puzzled questions can be raised, instead. Even Hamlet's assessment of it is open to question, as is any character's, because of his limited knowledge and his strong personal involvement. In no way does the Queen betray the burden of conscience the Ghost ascribes to her, nor the least inkling that her conduct may have anything to do with Hamlet's melancholy.

### III

The point to be stressed thus far is this: the exigencies of the plot prevent Hamlet from taking action against the Queen. Shakespeare, aware of this, prepared the idea as early as the first soliloquy. The Ghost's evidence that her conscience troubles her, although it is not shown, is meant to prepare us for her change of heart in the closet scene. But, until the Queen learns of the murder, the plot applies virtually no external pressures calculated to force her to do other than continue as Claudius' wife. She cannot, that is, define herself for us in any new way, because there is no new action for her to take. Even her continuing concern for Hamlet's sanity is no more than an extension of a quality in her, already demonstrated in the first act.

True, the larger picture of the Queen has been blackened for us by new knowledge: she is hypocritical and wanton, as well as shallow and insensitive. We have seen nothing to convince us that she conspired with Claudius to murder her husband, or even that she would be capable of doing so; but the Ghost's words plant in our minds the same doubts Hamlet now feels. Technically, the developing and filling-in of the picture have been achieved by adding information

supplied by others, not by the Queen herself through word and deed. The dramatic portraiture is indirect and passive, rather than direct and dynamic.

The play scene can, of course, be interpreted as applying external pressure to the Queen: in Hamlet's eyes it may be a test of her, as well as of Claudius, though he nowhere says as much. For us, it clears her of complicity, and this adds to our knowledge of her. But it is a negative proof; because of her innocence, and because she does not suspect what Hamlet is up to, she does nothing in the scene to define herself positively for us. Perhaps, this is partly because the pointed parallels of the dumb-show and of *The Murder of Gonzago* are really, for all their telling irony, so circumspect, that she faces nothing like the ordeal that causes Claudius to crack.

Out of obedience to the Ghost, perhaps, Hamlet does not insult his mother by publicly imputing to her either adultery (although he has shown no tendency to doubt it) or conspiracy to murder. It is as if she already stands condemned of so much in his eyes that the suspicion of murder is quite secondary. Even before the closet scene, Shakespeare (or another) is subtly shifting the emphasis to the revenge; for after Hamlet's encounter with his mother, she will no longer be a *major* concern in the rest of the plot. This may explain her curiously subordinate position in the play scene, where her only line is: "The Lady protests too much." And when the King rises, she accompanies him without a word.

We cannot tell whether or not, for Hamlet, the test of the Queen has been conclusive. He is still obedient to the Ghost:

I will speak daggers; those sharp words being spent,  
To do her wrong my soul shall ne'er consent. (III.2.37-8)

Yet he actually charges her with the murder at the beginning of the closet scene:

*Ham.* Not so much harm, good mother,  
As to kill a king, and marry with his brother.

*Queen.* How? kill a king?

*Ham.* Ay, a king. Nay, sit you down; and ere you part,  
If you be made of penetrable stuff,  
I'll make your eyes look down into your heart,  
And see how horrid there and black it shows. (III.4.19-25)

Her astonishment is genuine. We, at least, do not doubt it, nor does Hamlet seem to do so. It is almost as if, in his furious sense of injury, he hurls the charge at her merely as an opening gambit; he does not refer to it again. It is her infidelity and her incestuous lust which torment him; and if murder is still in his mind, it involves Claudius alone.

Neither the Queen nor Hamlet refers to the play-scene. Even after Hamlet accuses the King of murder, she does not link up that fact with what had immediately preceded it. Yet she accepts Hamlet's word as conclusive evidence, although

it is for her the word of a madman; and her repentance and change of heart follow hard upon it:

*Ham.* . . . And, mother, but assist me in revenge,  
And in his death your infamy shall die.

*Queen.* Hamlet, I vow by that majesty  
That knows our thoughts and looks into our hearts,  
I will conceal, consent, and do my best,  
What stratagem soe'er thou shalt devise.

*Ham.* It is enough. Mother, good night . . . (IV.4.101-7)

Compared to the later versions, the entire scene is hurried and underdeveloped. The Queen's shending and repentance are so perfunctory as to make unconvincingly abrupt her offer to help Hamlet in his revenge. But the brevity of the scene, achieved partly through scamping the reactions of Corambis' (Polonius') death, only serves to show that the Queen is for much of the time little more than a convenient foil, a mere "feeder" of lines, against whom Hamlet can vent his passion. But the Queen does perform two definite actions in the scene: she repents, and she swears to help her son revenge his father's death. These actions tend to define her character at this particular point. In the logic of drama, they should lead to subsequent actions for which they prime our expectations. But these actions do not take place; and so she cannot, until her death, actively confirm her change of heart and her decision.

Although the following scenes do nothing to solve this dramaturgic difficulty, but rather accentuate it, they may be interpreted as consistent with her new alliance. In the presence of Rossencraft and Gilderstone, the Queen tells the king only of Hamlet's frenzy, nothing of the real gist of their encounter in her closet. This concealment is designed to help Hamlet by shielding his true motives. Her motive may be mother love, but she takes her cue from a madman. During Hamlet's leave-taking before his voyage to England, she is present but dramatically superfluous; unless, again, her silence at his sarcastic "Farewell, mother," which is directed at Claudius, of course, is meant to hide their new alliance under a pretense of estrangement. When Leartes [sic] forces his way into the King's presence to revenge his father's death, she defends Claudius from the charge. And, after that, she lapses into silence, even during Ophelia's mad scene. Why did she defend Claudius? To prevent his death because she still feels some love for him? Or to save him for Hamlet's revenge? We cannot tell; there is too little to go on.

The next scene (IV.4) is peculiar to the First Quarto alone. It gives Gertrude dramatic focus and it permits her to act in a way consistent with her new resolve, *but to no significant end*. Horatio relays to her Hamlet's message regarding the king's unsuccessful attempt to have him murdered in England, and his imminent return. She urges Horatio to warn Hamlet to be "wary of his presence, Lest that he fail in that he goes about"; and she leaves "With thousand mother's blessings to my son." The scene, primarily expositional in purpose, helps to establish Gertrude's rehabilitation in our eyes by showing her faithful

to her pledge and maternally concerned for Hamlet's safety and success. Yet, though the news comes through the sane Horatio, Gertrude again accepts without question the word of a madman, and finds therein confirmation of Claudius' villainy. One might suspect guile on her part; in the presence of Horatio, Hamlet's friend, it looks more like gullibility. She again pleads Hamlet's madness in placating Leartes at the grave: "Alas! it is his madness makes him thus, And not his heart, Leartes." To accept even this as a stratagem smooths the immediate difficulty, but only at the cost of ignoring her quite sincere conviction of Hamlet's madness in the closet-scene. Is it guile or credulity which prompts her pious remark to Claudius, of whose guilt she is convinced, when they end the graveyard scene thus:

*King.* Come, Gertred; we'll have Leartes and our son  
Made friends and lovers, as befits them both,  
Even as they tender us, and love their country.

*Queen.* God grant they may. (V.2.175-8)

What we sense is the need for a scene in which Claudius confronts the Queen, knowing that she knows of his guilt. But such an obligatory scene would also involve her direct aid in achieving his death; and there remain only the final scenes of the wager, the duel, and the deaths of the principals. The Queen, who has reached no such conclusion about providence as her son, might well be expected to find in the wager some villainous mousetrap baited for him. But she does not. The revenge itself has, seemingly, been postponed and put out of mind. She drinks a toast to Hamlet and dies, with the belated warning on her lips: "O, the drink, the drink; Hamlet, the drink!" In the revenge intrigue, is the Queen ultimately ineffectual? Or is there irony here? Is it her final warning to Hamlet which at last causes him to rush upon the king and kill him?

Before turning to examine the Queen's character in the other versions, we can reach some conclusions as to her adequacy in the First Quarto. She is two-dimensional, and not altogether credible, even before the closet-scene. Thereafter, the effort to make her function consciously in the revenge plot leads to puzzling inconsistencies of motivation and final failures. She is so credulous that she apparently believes both her mad son and her villainous husband. Curiously blind to the effect of her remarriage on her son, she seems equally blind to subsequent events. She does nothing to prevent the tragedy, yet it may be that only her death is sufficient to spur Hamlet to his revenge. If so, she is sufficient to motivate the final catastrophe; but elsewhere, she has been used too much to swell a progress or set a scene, too little to add to the dramatic drive of the action. She is indeed a "stately defective," a makeweight, an uninteresting woman in an interesting dilemma.

#### IV

To see what Shakespeare has made of the Queen in the Second Quarto (and, of course, in the First Folio) is to receive valuable instruction in the art of play-writing. As we should expect, the major differences are to be found in the closet-scene and in the subsequent development of the intrigue—the very places

where we encountered most difficulty in motivation, plausibility, and development; and they greatly strengthen the role. But they alone do not effect the improvement; it is the filling-in by small touches here and there that completes the work of making the Queen an integral part of the main, as well as of the enveloping, action.

As before, Gertrude's torment of conscience is not externalized until the closet-scene, but a heightened note is struck as early as the Ghost's first speech to Hamlet, where the "burden" of sin the Queen carries becomes, far more vividly, "those thorns that in her bosom lodge To prick and sting her." Her motherly concern for Hamlet, despite her willful persistence in sin, is demonstrated more frequently in small ways, as in her plea to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern: "I beseech you instantly to visit My too much changed son." These contrasting qualities not only add interest to the Queen's character, but point to the means by which Hamlet finally brings about her change of heart. She is now more perceptive in diagnosing the seat of his melancholy:

I doubt it is no other but the main,  
His father's death and our o'erhasty marriage. (II.2.56-7)

In her ignorance of the Ghost's revelations, she cannot be expected to divine the true extent to which her actions have affected her son. Her fear and guilt plausibly prompt her to seize on Ophelia's rejection of him as the real cause of his melancholy: "It may be, very likely."

Claudius' torment of soul is externalized much earlier than is hers, by means of the aside beginning: "How smart a lash that speech doth give my conscience!" Yet it serves to condition us for the scenes that will later show this incestuous marriage as failing to yield the happiness both husband and wife sought in it. The Queen's focus in the play-scene is made clear when she asks, "How fares my lord?" Rosencrantz's conversation with Hamlet warns us of her state of mind, when he reports: "The Queen, your mother, in most great affliction of spirit, hath sent me to you," and follows it up with: "Then thus she says: your behaviour hath struck her into amazement and admiration." Whereas, before he had said only: "My Lord, your mother craves to speak with you."

Touches like these enable us to imagine what the Queen is feeling and doing when she is not present, and also to sense her influence as steadily operative, rather than arbitrarily injected from time to time. Thus her emotions, when they are finally and fully externalized, do not seem forced and ungraduated. In the First Quarto, the Queen had too little to say, sometimes nothing, in the scenes where she was brought on; and this dissipated her forcefulness. It is far better conserved in the Second Quarto, for in the scenes where the Queen could make no contribution, she has been eliminated. The small references to her now and then consequently become more effective, as when Polonius tells the King: "I'll warrant she'll tax him home . . . ." "Look you lay home to him," Polonius had told her: "Pray you, be round with him." And her hearty assent: "I'll warrant you, fear me not," develops the anger she had felt when Hamlet threatened the King by means of the play. This shows her as more aware

of Hamlet's apparent purpose in the mousetrap, and opens the closet-scene with sharper conflict of wills. Because the scene is more fully developed, she can prolong the note of anger: "Come, come, you answer with an idle tongue," and this motivates her decisiveness: "Nay, then, I'll set those to you that can speak." It changes subtly into the defensiveness with which she tries to avoid the subject of her marriage. Here Shakespeare uses Hamlet himself to help define for us her state of mind, her willful blindness and hardness of heart:

If damned custom have not braz'd it so  
That it is proof and bulwark against sense. (III.4.37-8)

Because of the way in which the scene has been handled, the Queen now has a fiercer internal struggle, and puts up a more violent fight than she did earlier; and Hamlet not only exceeds his earlier passion, but helps us to sense how her sin has paralyzed her better qualities. Her realization—her recognition scene—is thus more gradually approached, with an increase in plausibility; and her consequent repentance is both more intense and more prolonged. What was, in the First Quarto, a melodramatic change of heart has been transformed into one of the great scenes of the play—an emotionally exhausting one to experience in the theater. The result is an enormous growth of stature in the Queen.

But this very thrusting forward of her might well wreck the remainder of the revenge intrigue. The way in which Shakespeare avoids this danger is technically even more ingenious than the way in which he intensified the closet scene. Having at last faced the extent of her sin and its effect on Hamlet, Gertrude looks to him for help: "What shall I do?" She sees herself, like him, caught in the consequences of her act. Her change of heart has not solved her dilemma; it has actually complicated it; and here is where the ingenuity of the playwright is most apparent. Hamlet tells her, after the Ghost's reappearance, that she may not attribute his passionate rebukes to madness:

Lay not that flattering unction to your soul,  
That not your trespass, but my madness speaks. (III.4.145-6)

Her "fighting soul" is prevented from seizing on that convenient excuse. What she must do above all is to keep from the King the fact "that I essentially am not in madness, But mad in craft." This one thing she can do, Hamlet feels; whereas, he is by no means so sure that she can refrain from going again to his uncle's bed. The emotional tone and pressure are, so to speak, transposed into another key and diminished. The scene now has a sad, realistic quality, as though at last, Hamlet knows, as well as his mother, that life is not so easily changed from its old habits, nor are conversions so easy and clear-cut in their effects. Mother and son reach a real, but deliberately limited, accord:

Be thou assure'd, if words be made of breath,  
And breath of life, I have no life to breathe  
What thou hast said to me. (III.4.197-9)

Though tender, their parting is muted and wistful.

From the playwright's point of view, it is a way out; and one that will avoid

the inconsistencies of the First Quarto. Hamlet, by effecting the Queen's repentance, has come to terms with his mother's deeds, and so can now proceed to a reconciliation with life. The way is thus opened for the revenge plot. Their accord motivates the continuation of the status quo which must not, at this point, be radically altered. We accept as credible the conclusion of the scene, without realizing how little has actually been concluded; and we do so, perhaps, because we feel that, even if the Queen continues as Claudius' wife (and not merely for the sake of appearance, either), their relationship cannot be what it was. The seeds of its dissolution are now beginning to work in it.

Hamlet has enjoined secrecy in regard to his uncle's guilt and his own sanity. Gertrude would not likely break silence about the former; he can trust her to keep it about the latter. More important, he has not made her privy to his plans for revenge, and he has kept her in ignorance of all else. He has formed an alliance with his mother, but refrained from burdening her with any responsibility for taking action. For the playwright, this means that she is prevented from playing an actively decisive role in the accomplishment of the revenge. This is a crucial change of plot from the former version. Shakespeare has effectively *neutralized* Gertrude's function in the revenge: he has removed the dramatic pressure from her, he has deliberately deprived her of the initiative, and has thereby succeeded in relegating her to a comparatively subordinate place in the ensuing action. It is an admirable instance of control.

Now when Gertrude refers hereafter to Hamlet's madness, we are sure of her motives and clear about her character: she is acting under orders. The opening of Act IV, scene 1 gives the Queen an opportunity to obey them even while she is still overwrought from her late encounter. She tells Claudius of Polonius' death and attributes it to Hamlet's "lawless fit"; "Mad as the seas and wind, when both contend Which is the mightier." At the same time she tries to calm the King's fear and anger: "He weeps for what is done." This scene and others like it, give us insight into the unhappy marriage of Claudius and Gertrude, at the same time that they carry forward the King's dilemma where Hamlet is concerned. They *dramatize* the marriage, because they show it in motion; and it moves toward dissolution.

Hamlet's leave-taking (IV.3) is an instance where the Queen has been removed from a scene in which she was silent and superfluous. His gibe at the King: "Farewell, dear mother," actually gains in dramatic point by her absence; yet at the same time we are reminded of her. The scene between the Queen and Horatio which we noted as peculiar to the First Quarto is, happily, absent. Instead, we have an interchange between them leading up to the entrance of Ophelia, mad; and the Queen's first and only aside. The Folio gives to her the few lines, preceding the aside, which were spoken by Horatio in the Second Quarto:

'Twere good she were spoken with, for she may strew  
Dangerous conjectures in ill-breeding minds.  
Let her come in. (IV.5.14-16)

The interesting point is not that the lines have been transferred from one

character to another; but that the Queen, now that she has been dramatically—as well as morally—rehabilitated, could well say them plausibly in character, and function more positively in the scene. The Queen of the First Quarto would not have been so forethoughtful.

Her aside points to the dissolution of her relationship with the King and prepares for the ultimate catastrophe, while externalizing her continuing torment:

To my sick soul, as sin's true nature is,  
Each toy seems prologue to some great amiss;  
So full of artless jealousy is guilt,  
It spills itself in fearing to be spilt.      (IV.5.17-20)

When the King enters during Ophelia's ravings, he tells the Queen of the troubles that are piling up. Here, in another small glimpse of their marriage, she gains information, but still without the necessity of initiating action. Just by being told things, she is made to seem more intelligent. In the First Quarto, her ignorance of affairs had had the opposite effect: that of making her look stupid. Furthermore, she shows intelligence in realizing the consequences, as well as the error, of her actions. Such realization makes her a more vital and significant character, whose death in the duel scene will seem the logical issue of her misdeeds.

Another touch that dramatizes the marriage and retrospectively strengthens the Queen's rehabilitation is Claudius' explanation to Laertes (IV.7) of his failure to take strong action against the increasing threat of Hamlet's presence. Even allowing for a character's ability to distort facts to his own advantage, and admitting that Claudius has good cause to "juggle" with Laertes, what he says is so consistent both with his treatment of the Queen and with what we know of her, that we recognize its truth:

The Queen his mother

Lives almost by his looks; and for myself—  
My virtue or my plague, be it either which—  
She's so conjunctive to my life and soul,  
That, as the star moves not but in his sphere,  
I could not but by her.      (IV.7.11-16)

Under the altered circumstances of the later versions, the Queen's defense of Claudius from the charge of killing Polonius does not strike us as inconsistent. We know that her torment is a continuing thing; we know that she made no sweeping resolves to cut herself off completely from the King, nor did Hamlet demand it of her. It is credible and human that she should still love the King, natural for her twice to restrain Laertes physically, and to shrink from imminent violence which now seems to surround her sick soul. This action is now as consistent with her character as is her excusing of Hamlet's violence later in the graveyard scene. She now acts always in consonance with her character, which is both clearer in its motives and more complicated in its divided loyalties.

These latter figure in the conspiracy between Claudius and Laertes, thus showing her influence on the King and his care, when hatching his plot, to take

her into account:

... I will work him

To an exploit, now ripe in my device,  
Under the which he shall not choose but fall;  
And for his death no wind of blame shall breathe,  
But even his mother shall uncharge the practice  
And call it accident. (IV.7.64-9)

By carefully withholding from the Queen the knowledge of Claudius' treachery toward Hamlet, Shakespeare makes credible her conduct in the dueling scene. She has had no confirmation of his villainy toward her son, as she did in the First Quarto; she has only the ever-present knowledge that he killed King Hamlet. Moreover, Hamlet himself so obviously wishes to court Laertes' favor, in order to obtain forgiveness, that his willingness to accept the wager removes any possibility of suspicion on her part. Her actions during the duel are entirely consistent with what we have seen of her before: her sole concern is for her son.

By one of those small touches that count for so much in playwriting, the drama of her poisoning is heightened. When she collapses, the King tries to hide the meaning of her fall with the words: "She swounds to see them bleed." She must make certain that Hamlet is aware of the poisoned drink and of his own danger:

No, no, the drink, the drink,—O my dear Hamlet,—  
The drink, the drink! I am poison'd. [Dies.] (V.2.320-21)

And she is kept in focus, thereafter, by Laertes: "Lo, here I lie, Never to rise again. Thy mother's poison'd." And by Hamlet's: "Wretched queen, adieu!"

## V

There can be no question but that the unity of the Queen's character has been enormously increased in the later versions. Her character is both enriched and much better motivated. Even though in the main action of the play, we may still see her as more important for what she stands for than for what she does, we can see now that Shakespeare found a way to fuse her guilt story with the revenge story—and the way is Hamlet. He did this while maintaining the course of the revenge story and leaving the initiative in its plot where it belonged—with Hamlet. In an action as far-ranging and complicated as this one, the problems of control and dramatic focus are staggering to consider. Shakespeare naturally had to scale his characters to various degrees of dramatic interest, in order to achieve balance and proportion; he had to deemphasize or "flatten" some, in order to treat others with the depth and complexity his dramatic vision required.

The Queen seems to me a necessary victim of this artistic sacrifice, and a particular one. Her initial action contained so strong a dramatic potential that, had she been a more positive character with something of her son's many-sidedness, she might have usurped too much dramatic focus and ceased to fulfill

her function in the plot. Then we should have had quite a different play. I think that Shakespeare, well aware of this constant threat, deliberately neutralized it, because his given plot denied the Queen the means of effective action. Despite her initial importance, she had to be held to a subordinate place in the total scheme of action. For his own good reasons, Shakespeare could not afford to make her more active than she is; but he could, and did, make capital of his necessity; he created a character with specific attributes that would serve his purpose, and serve it adequately—if not vividly.

## MIRROR FOR MOBS: THE WILLIE STARK STORIES

By LEONARD CASPER

Within a year after the assassination of Louisiana's homespun Caesar, Huey P. Long, in 1936, while still an instructor at Louisiana State University, Robert Penn Warren felt impelled to write a play about a man corrupted by the very power which he had invoked against corruption. Long, himself, whom Warren knew as a political phenomenon rather than as a personal acquaintance, was never more than one installment in the emergence of the character of Willie Stark. On Rome's alarmed streets in the summer of 1938, when Mussolini's legionnaires paraded in hope of battle and plunder, Warren found variants of the man "whose power was based on the fact that somehow he could vicariously fulfill certain secret needs of people about him." Alexis Carrel's experiments with immortalized chicken hearts were the donee for what Warren later described as "the theme of the relation of science (or rather, pseudo-science) and political power, the theme of the relation of the science-society and the power-state, the problem of naturalistic determinism and responsibility, etc."<sup>1</sup>

By the end of 1939, Warren had completed his mixed verse-prose play, *Proud Flesh*, first produced seven years later on the suggestion of Eric Bentley at the University of Minnesota during Warren's term there. By then, the material, reworked, had already been published as the Pulitzer Prize novel, *All the King's Men*. A year later Warren's adaptation of the novel was staged off-Broadway. He approved, with qualifications, the motion picture script directed by Robert Rossen, which became a 1949 Academy Award winner. A "final" version, tentatively called *Willie Stark: His Rise and Fall*, having been premiered late in 1958 at the Margo Jones Theatre in Dallas, is planned for eventual Broadway production.

If Jack Burden is a contemporary Ancient Mariner compelled to speak to compensate for the last-minute inarticulateness of Willie Stark, Warren is an even stranger Ancient Mariner whose tale to the wedding guest is varied each time. The playwright's explanation is understandable. "In trying to dramatize the novel I found myself, by the logic of the contrast between dramatic form and fictional form, re-interpreting, re-thinking, shifting emphases . . . . If you begin to alter, however casually, a form . . . you are bound in the end to alter meaning."<sup>2</sup>

So possessed has Warren become by the figure of Stark—the American demagogue, mirror of mobs, through whom each man creates his own doom—that

1 "A Note to All the King's Men," *Sewanee Review*, LXI (Summer, 1953), 477.

2 "The Old and the New of It," program notes to *Willie Stark: His Rise and Fall*, Margo Jones Theatre, Winter, 1958, p. 7.

Leonard Casper, a professor of English at Boston College, is known to *Drama Critique* readers because of his previous contributions. Doctor Casper's book on Robert Penn Warren, from which this material is adapted, will be published in December.

he has clutched it hip, thigh, and small of the back through all its changes with every handhold he has ever practised: poem, drama, novel. Yet of all these versions only the novel can surpass the imaginative language of *Proud Flesh* as a means of characterization and indirect narration.

*Proud Flesh* suggests the flexibility of scenic means developed in later versions, but little of the plot complexities. The theme is enacted with almost brutal simplicity. Willie's power politics are treated by the play as the dramatic symptom of an amoral science-society. Appropriately, Stanton, the man of science, slays the politician he has produced, occasioning his own destruction, and thereby, fulfilling the death wish inherent in such a society. A chorus of surgeons, on stage throughout, is employed not to mediate between play and audience but to quarantine its meaning, to sterilize communication of anything metaphysical. The chorus' survival, its very invulnerability to the play's processes, make it the ultimate adversary. The playwright's problem was to counterbalance the chorus' massiveness, its homogeneity, by individualizing the portraits of Adam and Willie, to avoid writing a morality play. Dramatic engagement, for example, is achieved through the blind contest of Willie's selves for supremacy. He is knowable only through the actions of the play rather than in simple predictability before the curtain rises. In Anne Stanton's renunciation scene, the crowning irony is disclosed: Willie has been assigned the satisfaction of needs which he himself in his emptiness shares. He can be the crowd's epitome, but not its saviour.

Willie's conscience, resurgent, leaves him defenseless in a roaring world of his own making. He is struck down in the midst of trial regeneration. The real weakness of the play is that it does not re-create the past in which that conscience once stood erect and was audible. The possibility of Willie's having been a reformer was yet to be invented by Warren. *Proud Flesh's* Willie is not the richly enigmatic and divided man of the novel-in-progress, but a figure of lesser dimension, harried by ambition to the boundaries of irresponsibility and rescued only by the shock of having killed his future in the death of his son. His ex-wife's sufferance and sacrificial love are offered him for imitation, but contrition cannot restore original innocence, and without being surprised by the fact, he dies for his crimes.

Stanton's character is in many ways more fractured. Although a doctor, he is alienated from the pragmatics of the chorus because of his idealism. His sense of the present world's incongruity, when contrasted with what he holds possible, fills his mind with images of rot and stench and pus. Although he bitterly realizes that the political corruption surrounding him is a mere symbol of every man's corrupt spirit, yet he will not succumb. He will not surrender to the scientist's confusion of morality with expediency. Only his sister's defection defeats him, forcing him to admit the admixture of good and evil not only in the world as a whole, but in each person and particle of that world. For Adam, there is no saving degree of difference between his own imperfection, once acknowledged, and the "essential deformity" which is Willie's. He feels compelled to remove them both.

Stanton, therefore, dies without achieving the equivalent of Willie's revelation-recognition of the value of restraint. In considering him strong enough to accept responsibility, Anne has misjudged the governor. Until his last moments,

he is *too* strong to accept responsibility. Nevertheless, before his death he has begun to earn his right to live. Stanton, on the other hand, destroys himself for being human. The play's darkest lines are properly his. He cannot endure suffering. Nor has he any resource of consolation such as Willie and Lucy, reconciled, begin to discover in compassionate understanding. The poetic transformation of Stanton's torment compensates for the play's infirmities: the chorus' disproportionate role and exaggerated self-satire; the inadequate characterizations of Sadie Burke, Jack Burden, and Tom Stark; the occasional self-parody, of the poetry in the mouths and minds of characters incapable of understanding its splendor.

The following years of research for his textual analysis of the sacramental vision in Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* became accessory to Warren's own developing "life web" philosophy of human interactions. Gradually, interest shifted from the solitary father-image to those whose need participated in its erection. In the novel, *All the King's Men*, Jack Burden, once insignificant bystander in *Proud Flesh*, discovers that the neutrality which he tried to perfect as history student, reporter, and political researcher is impossible. But rejection is no more satisfying than detachment. His task becomes the understanding of Willie, and of himself in Willie, and both in the world, largely against his own will. His split-level narration is reminiscent of *Proud Flesh*'s duality—the tough-realistic and the poetic.

The awarding of a Pulitzer prize to his novel, however, did not prevent Warren from seeking again the theater's dramatic immediacy for his theme of the soul's civil corruption. Unfortunately, the off-Broadway staging of his novel in 1947, suffered from multiplicity, cluttering the theater with so many scenes from the book that motivation became summarized and unconvincing. The achievement of continuous movement, through the blacking out of all stage areas but the one briefly committed to each of twenty-four scenes, only compounds the sense of spliced action, incoherent without the novel as referent. The chorus of surgeons has been reduced to a single Professor of Science who occasionally comments on the progress of events or debates with Jack Burden on the forestage, but his presence creates more problems than it solves. Overabundance of episodes becomes a substitute for characterization instead of a means for its evocation; and the demagoguery of Willie Stark is allowed to dominate the play, *All the King's Men*.

Warren was justly criticized for these faults, but he was unjustly criticized for the screenplay, which was the work of Robert Rossen who had borrowed heavily from the book for the dialogue. In the filmed version, the figure of Stark is larger than that of a bootleg ganglord, but far inferior to that of Ahab. Part of the book's strategy, through Burden's role of participant-spectator, is to involve the reader's own sense of guilt and understanding in the tragic horrors. But the cosmic web, as confirmed by secret paternity, collapses in the motion picture through substitution of Judge Stanton for the now missing Judge Irwin; and the Cass Mastern story is omitted altogether. Consequently, the audience never has to undeceive itself; it can assassinate Willie Stark without seeing its face suddenly on his effigy; it is never purged of its ambivalence. This is the movie's flaw which permitted critics to attribute their own confusion to Warren.

Perhaps, it was this misunderstanding which induced Warren to revise the stage version of *All the King's Men* when he was approached by director Aaron Frankel. Not a revision, but a new play, *Willie Stark: His Rise and Fall*, emerged from their talks. This "final" treatment, premiered in an arena theater but intended for proscenium theater production, in many ways returns to the scenic simplicity of *Proud Flesh*. Although it lacks the earlier play's poetry, it retains the dominant roles which Burden and Irwin have evolved from version to version. In *Proud Flesh*, Judge Irwin's part did not exist; his creation is foreshadowed only in Willie's reference to a corrupt Senator Crosby who has been driven to suicide by notoriety. By eliminating choric comments and by limiting the action to twelve scenes, Warren avoids the cumbersome form which made his staged novel, *All the King's Men*, impracticable.

Earlier experiments with flexibility have been continued and improved. Subordination of props and sets provides the mobility necessary to scene shifts without lags in action. Audience involvement is managed by having actors both narrate and play their roles.<sup>3</sup> Massive suggestiveness is made possible with relative economy.

However, simplicity, once again, has destroyed the father-son relationship of Jack and Irwin, as well as the reconstructed past of Willie, without which, the final will towards reform seems like a plot contrivance. His brusque intrusion, at the moment of Judge Irwin's confession to Jack, is particularly destructive of his potential appeal for forbearance. In fact, foreshortening robs *most* of the characters of those glimpsed humane preliminary moments which authorize the expenditure of sympathy. Sadie's hatred of Anne foreshadows her own suffering; Judge Irwin's suicide, in the absence of precedent facts of his past, appears to be only a less subtle version of Adam's: neither can live without self-deception. But the most serious change is in the characterization of Willie himself.

Yet this change is, at least, conceptually valid. In both plays, *All the King's Men* and *Willie Stark*, the Boss is permitted to add in the epilogue, "Being a man, I did not know what I was, nor what might be the fullness of man. But being a man I yearned toward that definition, even in the dark night of my ignorance." What prevents this from being the mere rhetoric of apology—of man defeated? Jack's faith in Willie, without which he could not bear "to watch the living and the dying," might be only another in a history of delusions. Jack, in the play, is not the same explorer of souls as the novel's narrator. He has even dared to accuse Stark of using the hospital just as he has always used his patronage of Tiny—to simulate piety. There is little beyond his need, then, to justify Jack's faith; therefore, little reason to ask the spectator to respect that faith. Is it Willie's startling self-denial before his final public gathering that enjoins our belief: "What man knows the truth of his heart? But I shall look in my heart, and I hope to find some love for you." Is it his self-incrimination in the hope

<sup>3</sup> Aaron Frankel explains the device, reminiscent of Brecht's, thus: "Given the cue, they [the actors] step outside the action of the story to observe, comment on, and justify themselves to the audience. The illusion on the stage, while still sought after, is important only so long as the characters, like a chorus, may argue about its meaning, making not merely the stage but audience and whole theater into a tribunal, a forum." From the program notes to *Willie Stark: His Rise and Fall*, Margo Jones Theater, Winter, 1958, p. 5.

of enough innocence to be able to look them in the eye? Sugar Boy's refrain is a warning: "The B-B-Big B-B-Boss—he k-k-kin talk so good!" Is it, however, perhaps a promise, too?

In his public confession, in his dying assurance that "everything might have been—different," in his epilogue summation, the words of Willie can at last be trusted *because he does not trust himself*. At the precise moment of clarification and expected regeneration, he finds himself doomed by habit: "you start, and then you find it is just the same . . . You find you're just heaving yourself around like you did. You find yourself saying the same things." He has killed a part of the essential Willie before Adam ever draws the assassin's pistol. Paradoxically it is this fact, Willie's self-understanding, which rescues him from condemnation.

It is this which warrents respectful regard for his last invocation, which is not a harangue in the thumping tradition: "But being man I yearned toward that definition, even in the dark of my ignorance. I say this not for extenuation or for forgiveness, for I have no need now for those things. All I need now is truth." Despite the limitations of *Willie Stark: His Rise and Fall* as independent drama in which only the decline is shown, this single insight into man is earned and possessed, inaccessible to loss. In it lies the heart of the truth, beyond moralization or expectation, towards which Warren long has been working: the wonder of man, his own executioner.

*This article is indebted to Kerker Quinn of the University of Illinois and Wesley Swanson of the Illini Theatre Guild for *Proud Flesh*, A and B versions; William M. Schutte and the Department of Drama at Carnegie Institute of Technology for the script of *All the King's Men*; the William Morris Agency and Aaron Frankel of the Margo Jones Theatre, for *Willie Stark: His Rise and Fall*.*

## THE POETRY RECITAL

*for JOHN LOGAN\**

He tuned the Andes with Chicago's saint  
like a thrush outbalancing its neck  
of windpipe, perilous to limb and joint.

In Cumbre air where every breath rang thick  
and vowel thin as wing or hyaline,  
his sweatdrops oozed into a cheekbone crock.

The ear reached up and caught a fingering  
of keys that freed the melody he now  
remembered from a stanza rhyming lean.

No flowing he had ever heard could tow  
a music keen as this: to pare the flesh  
and make a man more naked in his awe.

He shivered to an interval of hush  
among his students at the mountain foot,  
afraid that some saw ember snuff to ash.

But heirloom seconds of his Elgin flicked  
away the silence. As he chimed a page  
of frightened bells within his manuscript

to round Francesca's cycle or to dodge  
a self of incomplete, arriving moon,  
ribs told they had fulfilled a mountain urge.

Descending, he surmised he should go home,  
slip through the gateway of his private yard,  
and for the length of starcount be alone.

Secure inside, he could rake up the shard.

Raymond Roseliep

\* reading "Mother Cabrini Crosses the Andes" from his *Cycle for Mother Cabrini*

Reverend Raymond Roseliep is a member of the English faculty of Loras College, Dubuque. Since the poetry recital is closely allied to dramatic art, Father Roseliep's contribution should be of special interest to readers.

## REASON AND FAITH AS SEEN BY GRAHAM GREENE

By THOMAS A. WASSMER, S.J.

Plato has some interesting words to say about agnosticism concerning the gods. In *Timaeus* he tells Socrates:

Do not be surprised, Socrates, if over a wide range of topics connected with God and the creation of the universe we are not able to make statements that are entirely consistent with themselves or at all precise. But if we produce what is as probable as anything else, we must be content, remembering that I who speak and you who judge are only human beings and must accept the probable story about these things and not go in search of anything beyond.<sup>1</sup>

Graham Greene in "A Visit to Morin"<sup>2</sup> might have consoled the author of "Le Diable au Ciel" and "Le Bien Pensant" if he had placed these words of *Timaeus* on the lips of Dunlop, the visitor. They might not have satisfied the mind of Morin whom some had accused of Jansenism, while others insisted upon calling him an Augustinian. Still, they might have made less difficult the speculation on faith and belief between Dunlop, the buyer and seller of wine, and this novelist who could tantalize his readers with such diverse characters, some of whom "accepted a dogma so whole-heartedly that they drew out its implications to the verge of absurdity, while others examined a dogma as though they were constitutional lawyers, determined on confining it to a legal minimum."<sup>3</sup>

The encounter on Christmas Eve between these two men was bound to be stimulating. Dunlop, a non-Catholic, had been driven to ask a Catholic chaplain during the war to teach him just what Catholics *did* believe, but the answer he received was a loan of two books—"one a penny catechism with its catalogue of preposterous questions and answers, smug and explanatory: mystery like a butterfly killed by cyanide, stiffened and laid out with pins and paper strips."<sup>4</sup> The chaplain suggested that he read Chesterton rather than Morin's novels although Dunlop surprised the priest by telling him that his first interest in the faith was stirred by the books with which the chaplain would not waste his time. The wine merchant had found Morin's work fresh and exciting ever since he had been taught by a Roman Catholic master who had been close to

1 Plato *Dialogues* ii. 13.

2 *Harper's Bazaar*, XCL, Part 1 (January, 1957), 94-97, 148-149.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 95.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 97.

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Morin's generation. Perhaps the pleasure and offense that Morin had provoked in that generation were the real reasons why Dunlop discovered increasing fascination for this intense writer. Dunlop soon became one of those "enthusiastic readers among the non-Christians who, when once they had accepted imaginatively Morin's premises, perhaps detected in his work the freedom of speculation which put his fellow Catholics on their guard."<sup>5</sup> Little wonder that he looked upon him as a revolutionary writer even though some of the excitement and fire had gone from those pages.

The first encounter with Morin was at the Midnight Mass in a village outside Colmar, while he was kneeling at the crib with several others—an old man with a round head "like a peasant's, the skin wrinkled like a stale apple, the hair gone from the crown."<sup>6</sup> It was Morin's eyes that gave him away:

. . . they seemed to know too much and to have seen further than the seasons and the fields: of a very clear, pale blue, they continually shifted focus looking close and looking away, observant, sad and curious like those of a man caught in some great catastrophe which it is his duty to record, but which he cannot bear to contemplate without a break for any great length of time.<sup>7</sup>

At Communion time, Dunlop found himself alone with Morin among the empty chairs and began to enumerate in his mind the possible reasons for his remaining away from the Holy Table: inadvertent breaking of his fast, some slight act of uncharity or greed, some scruple about his lack of preparation. Had not Morin been the very one to prove to him the existence of this malady in Religious and, after all, was it not likely that he had projected his own scrupulosity upon his literary character, Durobier? Dunlop was reluctant to approach Morin on this subject; in fact, he wondered whether he could ever explain the reasons for the "vulgarity" of his curiosity in approaching him at all. He was convinced that writing is the most private of all arts, and yet, there are few of us who hesitate one moment to invade the writer's privacy.

When Morin invited the wine merchant to his home on the grounds that he always found it difficult to sleep after Midnight Mass and that he would like to offer his visitor some rare wine, the real encounter began. Morin expressed his satisfaction that Dunlop was not a Catholic, and thus, he could cast away any fears of offending him. What Morin did say in the course of this speculation on faith and belief might possibly offend some Catholics, but it will undoubtedly arouse many more questions than the theologically naive Dunlop could raise. There were many books on the shelves of the novelist which "had the appearance of bankrupt stock: small tears and dust and the discoloration of sunlight."<sup>8</sup> There were many volumes on theology but Morin would recommend none of them to Dunlop, because, "if a man wants to believe he must avoid theology."<sup>9</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 96-97.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

Is this another of Greene's paradoxes—that belief is undermined by theology and that there is an antinomy between faith and belief? Surely, Dunlop understood that Morin intended this paradox when he remarked:

A man can accept anything to do with God until scholars begin to go into details and the implications. A man can accept the Trinity, but the arguments that follow . . . Can you find anything more inadequate than the scholastic arguments for the existence of God . . . I used to get letters saying how I had converted them by this book or that. Long after I had ceased to believe myself I was a carrier of belief, like a man can be a carrier of disease without being sick.<sup>10</sup>

The tension between faith and belief that Morin considered to be so sharp is not impossible to accept if Morin is understood to have meant by faith the theological virtue, supernatural and gratuitous, whereby, in the words of the Vatican Council, "inspired and assisted by the grace of God, we believe, that the things which He had revealed are true; not because the intrinsic truth of the things is plainly perceived by the natural light of reason, but because of the authority of God Himself who reveals them, and who can neither be deceived nor deceive." In other words, there is most certainly a tension between theological faith and rational belief, and, paradoxically, theological faith might be consummate in someone who has little sympathy with the scholastic arguments from natural theology. We might even accentuate the paradox for Morin and his visitor by illustrating the tension existing in the mind of a professional theologian who has at his finger tips all the rational arguments and theological loci for the propositions of the faith, and yet, has lost the theological virtue of faith by his public articulation of an heretical doctrine. In other words, there is a compatibility between exhaustive speculative, theological knowledge and the absence of theological faith. This tension has to exist if faith is entitatively supernatural and sheerly gratuitous. Conversely, the tension is manifest in the absence of all theological knowledge and the presence of transcendent faith. Who has not met the Catholic whose faith is accompanied by an extraordinary ignorance of philosophical and theological proofs and by an almost equal disinterest in their acquisition?

We are not surprised then by Morin's recognition of this patent truth even if he is made to say it in a very startling manner. The paradoxes Greene places on his lips can be made all the more striking by the professional theologian. Ignorance and some dissatisfaction with rational arguments are compatible with supernatural faith; and who is going to emphasize this truth more than the Church does in demanding infant baptism, which produces sanctifying grace and brings the theological virtue of faith in its train? How many infants have ever found satisfaction with the natural theology of St. Thomas? Is Morin equivalently telling us to remain infants in theology and philosophy?

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

They tell you that in all change there are two elements, that which is changed and that which changes it. Each agent of change is itself determined by some higher agent. Can this go on ad infinitum? O no, they say, that would not give the finality that thought demands. But does thought demand it? Why shouldn't the chain go on forever? Man has invented the idea of infinity. In any case how trivial any argument based on what human thought demands must be. The thoughts of you and me and Monsieur Dupont. I would prefer the thought of an ape. Its instincts are less corrupted. Show me a gorilla praying and I might believe again.

But surely there are other arguments?

Four. Each more inadequate than the other. *It only needs a child to say to these theologians, why?—why not? Why not an infinite series of causes? Why should the existence of a good and better imply the existence of a best? This is playing with words. We invent the words and make arguments from them. The better is not a fact: it is only a word and a human judgment.*<sup>11</sup>

These formulations of the cosmological and henological arguments will annoy the philosopher-theologian but they cannot annoy him as much as one single statement made by Morin which only compounds the problem. The speculation indulged in by Morin and Dunlop thus far has been intelligible and reasonable except for the following observation: "I used to believe in Revelation but *I never believed in the capacity of the human mind.*"<sup>12</sup> Does it not seem that Morin has pushed his disbelief too far and that the acid of scepticism has been applied not only to rational arguments in philosophy and theology, but even to the very aptitude of the mind to attain truth? Morin appears to have been influenced by the anti-intellectualism of fideism and the traditionalism of the nineteenth century. Instigated by the German agnostics who disparaged the rational powers in man, the Fideists denied that the foundations of religious belief and practice, such as the existence of God, the freedom of the will, and the immortality of the soul could any longer be legitimated by an appeal to reason.

The valid tension postulated by Morin between the theological faith and rational disbelief (in the sense of dissatisfaction with rational arguments) can be found in one of Mary McCarthy's short stories about a precocious young lady, who had caused a great deal of bewilderment and consternation in a convent school. This young lady insisted that she had lost her faith because she found none of the arguments from St. Thomas for the existence of God cogently and demonstrably valid. The Reverend Mother should have made short shrift of her protests by a simple explanation that the compatibility between theological faith and a refusal to accept certain rational arguments is probative, and that she had not necessarily lost her faith simply because theodicy had lost its appeal.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

Admittedly, the position is temerarious that questions the radical capacity of the human mind to know God. The teaching of the Catholic Church is stated clearly by the Vatican Council: "Holy Mother Church holds and teaches that God, the beginning and end of all things, may be certainly known by the natural light of human reason by means of created things."<sup>13</sup> The Church's vindication of the capacity of human reason to know God is a reaffirmation of the Pauline text in the Epistle to the Romans: "The invisible things of Him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made." The Church has little sympathy, on the one hand, with those who disparage human reason (the fideists and traditionalists) or, on the other hand, with the olympian pretensions of the rationalists that reason is "the sole judge of the true and the false . . . that is is a law to itself and sufficient by its natural powers to procure the good of men and peoples."<sup>14</sup>

Pierre Morin is indeed no exaggerated rationalist, and if he had not made the bold statement that is suggestive of fideism, he would have proposed the problem which torments the philosopher-theologian. Just how far can we conceive this tension to operate between faith and rational doubt, between the *fides auctoritatis* (the theological, supernatural, gratuitous virtue of faith) and the *fides scientifica* (the dialectical conclusions from a series of syllogisms)? Just how far *can* and *should* an intelligent man exercise his prudent scepticism and realize within himself the dual obligation to doubt and to believe? It would appear to me, as a moral philosopher, that the distance is wide between a healthy consistent scepticism with rational arguments and a categorical negation of the aptitude of the mind to know God.

We are always indebted to Greene for making us re-examine our philosophical and theological positions. We expect him to place both literary shoulders against these polarities of faith and reason and to separate them as far as reality will allow. There is no complaint in his doing this with Morin's speculation on faith and belief. In fact, this is one of the most admitted artistic devices of Greene. We can only wish that he had not delivered Morin so soon into the hands of the fideists.

<sup>13</sup> *Constitutio de Fide Catholica*, Chapter 2.

<sup>14</sup> *Syllabus of Pius IX*, n. 3.

## ARTHUR BROKE: ELIZABETHAN DISSEMBLER

By JOHN J. McALEER

Although it is known that Arthur Broke's poem, *Romeus and Juliet*, lay before Shakespeare as he wrote his own account of the immortal lovers of Verona, little is known about Broke himself. What we do know tends to obscure rather than sharpen his image. Yet, actually, he may be responsible for the difficulties that exist. For weighty yet personal reasons he seems to have wished to mislead his readers. Nevertheless, we might ignore Broke's dissembling if it had not created and perpetuated a substantial mystery.

In his introduction to *Romeus and Juliet*, Broke reported he had recently seen enacted on stage a play that treated in much better fashion the same matter that appears in his poem. No trace of this play has been found, and, stranger still, no contemporary reference to it. Whether or not such a play truly existed is a matter of some importance. So long as the assumption persists that such a play did exist, we must consider the possibility that it also could have been a source of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Allowing for this possibility, some critics have suggested that various ostensibly original details in Shakespeare's play were in fact taken from the lost play. Yet the curious pattern of dissembling which Arthur Broke employs in both the verse and prose introductions to *Romeus and Juliet*, and which we shall presently make apparent, strongly argues that no such play ever existed, or at least not the kind of play which Broke describes.

The title page of Broke's poem alludes to it as "The Tragical Historye of *Romeus and Juliet*, written first in Italian by Bandell, and now in Englishe by Ar. Br."<sup>1</sup> This phrase makes it appear that Matteo Bandello's *Nouello* was the immediate source of Broke's poem. Yet we know now that his source was not Bandello but Pierre Boaistuau, whose version of Bandello's story appeared in French in Belleforest's *Histoires Tragiques*.<sup>2</sup> There is an excellent reason why Broke should want his readers to think that his source was Bandello rather than Boaistuau. Bandello's work appeared in 1554, eight years before Broke published his poem. Boaistuau's appeared in 1559, only three years before the publication of *Romeus and Juliet*. Assumably, Broke wanted his readers to think of *Romeus and Juliet* as a piece of juvenilia published after the author came to mature years, and, to support the view that he later regretted his youth-

1 J. J. Munro (ed.), *Brooke's 'Romeus and Juliet'* (New York, 1908), p. viii.

2 *Ibid.*, p. xxxv.

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ful indiscretion in writing it, he pretended that his chief source was a book which had appeared eight, and not three, years before his own publication.

This phase of Broke's dissembling could be passed over without further comment if Broke's age, at the time *Romeus and Juliet* was published and the impression which he meant to give about it, were not subjects of ancient dispute among his editors. In the preface to his edition of the poem Munro remarks:

Brooke's statement 'The eldest of them, lo, I offer to the stake, my youthful work,' with its context, have been thought to imply that his poem was an early production, which, later in life, he published, and for whose imperfections he desired to apologise; but such a hypothesis will not bear investigation. The immediate original of the poem was Boaistuau's *Histoires Tragiques*; and this was not published until 1559: Brooke's poem appeared in 1562; and the author could only have been referring to his *present* youth in the above statement.<sup>3</sup>

Munro, of course, forgets that Broke suppressed the fact that his source was Boaistuau. He sees that the poem was written recently but fails to see that Broke, in describing it as a "youthful work," is doing precisely what he did when he implied that Bandello was his source, that is, leaving with his reader the impression that the poem is not fresh from his hands but a work some years old which, now, only in his maturer years, he has decided to publish. In the introductory verse, "To the Reader," with which Broke prefaches the poem itself, he says:

Amid the desert rocks, the mountain bear  
Brings forth unformed, unlike herself, her young,  
Naught else but lumps of flesh withouten hair:  
In tract of time, her often-licking tongue  
Gives them such shape as doth, ere long, delight . . .  
Right so my muse  
Hath now at length, with travail long, brought forth  
Her tender whelps . . . The eldest of them, lo!  
I offer to the stake, my youthful work,  
Which one reproachful mouth might overthrow:  
The rest—unlicked as yet—awhile shall lurk . . .<sup>4</sup>

Phrases such as "in tract of time," "often-licking tongue," "now at length, will travail long," "the eldest of them," and "the rest unlicked as yet," show that Broke hoped to convince his readers that the poem was not written recently.

In yet another way, Broke strives to persuade readers that *Romeus and*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. xxiv-xxv.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. lxvii-lxviii.

*Juliet* is not newly written. In his prose introduction, he suggests that he made no borrowings from the new play because his work was completed beforehand. He says:

Though I saw the same argument lately set forth on stage with more commendation that I can look for—being there much better set forth than I have or can do—yet the same matter penned as it is may serve to like good effect, if the readers do bring with them like good minds to consider it, which hath the more encouraged me to publish it, such as it is.<sup>5</sup>

While Munro assumes that Broke's phrase "my youthful work," means that he is a tyro just starting his career, other critics have tried to emphasize Broke's youth by noting two lines within the poem itself which to them suggest that he author was still unmarried. These lines read:

I grant that I envy the bliss they lived in;  
Oh, that I might have found the like.<sup>6</sup>

On the basis of these two lines alone, Hudson states confidently, "We learn from the body of the poem that he was unmarried."<sup>7</sup> Yet these lines could mean also that he was married and, at that time, unhappily married. Or that, while a bachelor indeed, he is one of mature years who has sought in vain to change his status. Actually, the past tense which Broke employs here encourages this particular reading. Truly, he sounds like someone who feels that love has passed him by.

On March 19, 1563, four months to the day after the publication of *Romeus and Juliet*, Arthur Broke was drowned when the ship, *Greyhound*, carrying him on a mission to France for the Queen, foundered in the channel. This event is significant for us because it occasioned those few comments which, cumulatively, give us our only clue to Broke's actual age.

Two of these references are slight. Henry Cobham mentions that "little Brook and some other petty gentlemen" were among those lost with the *Greyhound*.<sup>8</sup> A poem on Arthur Broke's drowning, written by "Thomas Broke the younger" appeared in Arthur Broke's only other published work, *The Agreeemente of Sundry Places of Scripture*, which was at the publisher's at the time of the author's death, and appeared later the same year. We cannot know with certainty what Cobham meant by the word "little" but he may have meant "young." Thomas Broke's poem, since it affords no direct clue to Arthur's age, is important to us only because of the relationship we might conjecture between Arthur and "Thomas the younger."

Broke's death occasioned also a poem "On the Death of Master Arthur Brooke" by George Turberville which appeared in Turberville's *Epitaphs, Epi-*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. lxvi.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>7</sup> Henry N. Hudson (ed.), *The Works of Shakespeare* (Boston, 1864), X, 6.

<sup>8</sup> Munro, p. 165.

grams, *Songs and Sonnets*, perhaps first published in 1565.<sup>9</sup> This poem gives us the best clue to Broke's age. The pertinent lines read:

. . . as he to foreign realm was bound,  
With others more his sovereign Queen to serve,  
Amid the Seas unluckie youth was drowned,  
More speedie death than such one did deserve.<sup>10</sup>

We know nothing of the association between Turberville and Broke. But there is a likelihood that the two men knew one another well. Turberville, in 1561, when he was about eighteen, appears to have left Oxford and taken up residence in one of the Inns of Court. Cunliffe has discovered that Broke was admitted to the plays of the Inns of Court at Christmas, 1561.<sup>11</sup> These two facts considered, the possibility exists that Broke and Turberville met at one of the Inns of Court in that year. As Turberville evidently was only about twenty-two years old at the time he published his epitaph on Broke, he was, in fact, a youth himself and hence not likely to use the term "youth" to describe someone much older than himself.

We may conjecture, therefore, that, though Broke took pains to make his readers believe otherwise, he may not have been much above twenty years old when *Romeus and Juliet* was published. As we shall see, it would not have done for Broke to let his readers become aware of this fact.

While the title page and the dedicatory verses of Broke's poem are perplexing, the confusion which they cause is seen to be minor when matched against that created by his enigmatic prose preface to *Romeus and Juliet*. A significant portion of this preface reads:

The glorious triumph of the continent man upon the lusts of wanton flesh, encourageth man to honest restraint of wild affections; the shameful and wretched ends of such as have yielded their liberty thrall to foul desires teach men to withhold themselves from the headlong fall of loose dishonesty . . . . And to this end, good Reader, is this tragical matter written, to describe unto thee a couple of unfortunate lovers, thralling themselves to dishonest desire; neglecting the authority and advice of parents and friends; conferring their principal counsels with drunken gossips and superstitious friars (the naturally fit instruments of unchastity); attempting all adventures of peril for th'attaining of their wished lust; using auricular confession, the key of whoredome and treason, for furtherance of their purpose; abusing the honourable name of lawful marriage to cloak the shame of stolen contracts; finally by all means of dishonest life hastening to most unhappy death . . . . This precedent, good Reader, shall be to thee, as the slaves of Lacedemon, oppressed with excess of drink, deformed as altered from like.

<sup>9</sup> Hyder E. Rollins, "New Facts about George Turberville," *MP*, XV (1918), 134.

<sup>10</sup> George Turberville, *Epitaphs, Epigrams, Songs and Sonnets* (London, 1570), p. 144.

<sup>11</sup> John W. Cunliffe, "The Original 'Romeo and Juliet,'" *MLN*, VII (1912), 517.

ness of men both in mind and use of body, were to the free-born children, so shewed to them by their parents, to th' intent to raise in them an hateful loathing of so filthy beastliness.<sup>12</sup>

Rolfe is the only critic to be struck greatly by the incompatibility of this preface with the poem which it introduces. He remarks with canniness:

Its tone and spirit are strangely unlike those of the poem . . . . He refers to the perpetuation of 'the memory of so perfect, sound and so approved love' by the 'stately tomb' of Romeo and Juliet, with 'great store of cunning epitaphs in honour of their death;' but in the introduction expresses a very different opinion of the lovers and finds a very different lesson in their fate.<sup>13</sup>

No one who has read both preface and poem can dispute this analysis. To detect such insidiousness in the story of Romeo and Juliet is a discovery unique with Broke and one he did not himself apparently make until after his "often-licking tongue" had completed its work. There is nothing in Boaistuau to justify such a construction of the story, nor even in Paynter who, in 1567, produced in English a much more literal version of Boaistuau's tale than Broke's *Romeus and Juliet*. Nor does Bandello's story contain anything of this sort. True enough, his friar, seeking security, desires to attach himself to a person of influence, but the author, with kindly understanding, describes this inclination as quite normal for a man of scholarly persuasions. Even Shakespeare's Lawrence, whom no one thinks of as an agent of darkness, is more sharply rebuked than the friar in Broke's poem. It is Shakespeare's Juliet alone, who, in the sublimely human moments of her terror at taking the sleeping potion, wonders if the friar is trying to destroy her to cover his own blunders. The picture which Broke gives us in the following excerpts from the poem certainly is not that of the friar he describes in his preface:

The bounty of the friar and wisdom hath so won  
The townsfolks' hearts, that well nigh all to Friar  
Laurence run,  
To shrive themself; the old, the young, the great and small;  
Of all he is beloved well, and honoured much of all.

But now what shall betide of this grey-bearded sire?  
Of Friar Laurence thus arraigned, that good barefooted friar?  
Because that many times he worthily did serve  
The commonwealth, and in his life was never found to swerve,  
He was discharged quite, and no mark of defame  
Did seem to blot or touch at all the honour of his name.  
But of himself he went into an hermitage,  
Two miles from Verone town, where he in prayers passed forth  
Till that from earth to heaven his heavenly sprite did fly,  
Five years he live an hermit and an hermit did he die.<sup>14</sup>

12 Munro, pp. lxv-lxvi.

13 William J. Rolfe (ed.), *Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* (New York, 1904), p. 274.

14 Munro, pp. 22, 111.

Nor may we detect "filthy beastliness" in Broke's depiction of the hero and heroine, whom, as we have earlier seen, even he elsewhere professes to envy. Juliet, in her first interview with Romeo, says:

A happy life is love, if God grant from above,  
That heart with heart by even weight do make exchange of love.<sup>15</sup>

And Romeo declares:

For I of God would crave, as price of pains forepast,  
To serve, obey, and honour you, as long as life shall last.<sup>16</sup>

Surely, these are not the utterances of a pair "thralling themselves to dishonest desire"? Let us remember also that seemingly even the lost play to which Broke alludes was edifying.

The contrasting views in Broke's text and in his preface clearly pose a contradiction. What, then, could be the reason for such a preface? Could Broke possibly have meant us to believe that his *Romeus and Juliet* was such a youthful work, written so long before, that he had forgotten what it was about? Or did he want to cater to the baser side of human nature, inviting his readers to take up an innocent and poignant love story in the expectation of encountering much that was sordid and vile? Or, since he had his second book, a translation from the French of a Huguenot tract, ready for publication less than four months after *Romeus and Juliet* was published, may we not assume that this preface was written while he was occupied in that labor and reflects its influence? In none of these suggestions do we have a satisfactory explanation. Yet, in the last, we may detect the glimmerings of a truth now beginning to assert itself.

Thus far, we have suggested that Broke is guilty of dissembling on four counts: concealing his immediate source for *Romeus and Juliet*, concealing the date of composition of *Romeus and Juliet*, concealing his age, and misrepresenting the exact character of his work. Now, let us turn to our last and most serious charge, namely, that Arthur Broke deliberately hinted at the existence of a non-existent play on Romeo and Juliet. This charge proved, we may then finally record the circumstances which motivated this curious dissembling.

Opinions, as to what dramatic presentation Broke was referring when he mentions: "the same argument lately set forth on stage," vary widely. James Boswell, who wonders where Broke saw this play, suggests: "The rude state of our drama before 1562 renders it improbable that it was in England."<sup>17</sup> And Porter and Clarke note: "If there was any English play on the Romeo and Juliet plot earlier than Shakespeare's, no evidence remains of it . . . It is, of course, merely an inference that Broke refers . . . to an English play."<sup>18</sup> While Cunliffe thinks Broke may have seen the play to which he alludes at the Inns of Court, he does not insist that it was an English play. As a result of the stalemate reached whenever any effort is made to trace an English source, most critics have searched

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>17</sup> Horace H. Furness (ed.), *The Variorum Shakespeare. Romeo and Juliet* (Philadelphia, 1871), I, 399.

<sup>18</sup> Charlotte Porter and Helen A. Clarke (eds.), *The Tragedie of Romeo and Juliet* (New York, 1907), p. 121.

elsewhere. Gollancz says:

No trace has been found of the drama alluded to; it is difficult to imagine a popular Romantic play belonging to this early date (c. 1562), and no doubt Brooke was referring to some such Academic production as *Tancred and Gismunda*; possibly the play in question was an exercise in Latin verse, acted in a College Hall or at the Inns of Court . . . . There exist indeed among the Sloane MSS. the fragments of a Latin version of the story, evidently the exercise of a Cambridge student, but the MS. belongs, I think, to the beginning of the 17th century.<sup>19</sup>

Hunter, who seems to have made the modern discovery of this fragment, thought it was the lost play, but Fuller shows that Gollancz was correct in identifying it as a seventeenth-century effort.<sup>20</sup> Other critics have thought that Broke was referring to an imitation of Grotto's *Hadriana*. These claims all have been advanced with some hesitancy by their originators.

The most ambitious attempt to trace the lost play has been that of Harold Fuller. He has held that a Dutch play, *Romeo en Juliette*, written by Jacob Struijs about 1630, affords some clue to the nature of the lost play referred to by Broke. He argues that the work of Struijs shows borrowings from a lost play, presumably the stage version which Broke mentioned. Law says concerning Fuller's speculations: "Dr. Fuller makes it clear that either Shakespeare knew the 'original,' or else Struijs was indebted to Brooke, Boaistuau, and Shakespeare, all three."<sup>21</sup> To agree with Fuller, however, one must believe that Struijs translated the early English play in 1630 in ignorance of Shakespeare's greater work. Law says also: "If the play was still in existence thirty years after Broke saw it, we may be sure, from all that we know of Shakespeare's habits of workmanship, that he would likely have taken advantage of any hint that he could get from reading this old drama or seeing it acted."<sup>22</sup> This assumption, of course, is precisely the assumption that Fuller's theory, as set off by Broke's remark, would ask us to allow. Malone, who was the first to establish Shakespeare's debt to Broke, noted that Broke's version of Boaistuau was marked with "considerable alterations and large additions."<sup>23</sup> Yet even Fuller concedes that, with two exceptions, none of these alterations and additions is traceable to the lost play, which he reconstructs from Struijs.

There is general agreement that Shakespeare, in his version of the story, was far more original than any of his predecessors. Durham says: "The alterations which Shakespeare made are profound, affecting the whole tone and structure of the narrative as well as the characterization of individuals."<sup>24</sup> And Gollancz says:

Though in subject Shakespeare follows Brooke, it need hardly be

<sup>19</sup> Israel Gollancz (ed.), *Shakespeare's Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* (London, 1902), pp. x-xi.

<sup>20</sup> Harold de Wolf Fuller, "Romeo and Juliette," *MP*, IV (1906), 117.

<sup>21</sup> Robert A. Law (ed.), *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* (New York, 1913), p. xii.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xi.

<sup>23</sup> Furness, p. 397.

<sup>24</sup> Willard H. Durham (ed.), *The Most Excellent and Lamentable Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* (New Haven, 1917), p. 130.

said that in its *spirit*—in its transfiguration of the story—the play altogether transcends the poem; a greater effort than Brooke's wearisome production would pale its ineffectual fire before the flowing warmth of this *Song of Songs of Romantic Passion*.<sup>25</sup>

Boswell, influenced by Broke's remark concerning a stage version of *Romeo and Juliet*, fancies he sees in certain passages of Shakespeare's play a resemblance much more akin to the style of his predecessors than his own.<sup>26</sup> If we accept the contention of Fuller we must be prepared, in turn, to accept the implication, far in excess of Boswell's cautious surmise, that even a substantial number of Shakespeare's "profound alterations" may be from the lost play and that his originality in *Romeo and Juliet* is in inverse ratio to the proportion of these borrowings. Well might Fuller remark on "The vague doubts which have . . . beset every commentator of *Romeo and Juliet*,"<sup>27</sup> so long as the enigma of a lost play remains.

Porter and Clarke have observed with some discrimination that if Broke referred to an English play, "and if his word be accepted for it, it embodied a moral very different from Shakespeare's."<sup>28</sup> If we may enlarge upon this remark it should be said that the lost play must also have embodied a moral distinctly unlike that of Broke's poem. Boswell pointed out that the story, in its principal elements, possesses striking analogy to the older love-tales of *Hero and Leander*, *Pyramus and Thisbe*, and *Tristan and Isolde*. If Broke was sincere when he wrote his remarkable preface to *Romeus and Juliet*, his frame of mind, then perhaps, would have allowed him to recognize an identity between his story and almost any other love story. Certainly, if he intended his preface as a description of the poem that follows it, we are left free to assume that, to give substance in his own mind to his statement, he might have drawn no less a far-fetched parallel between his poem and its fancied dramatic version. Or, we may believe that, for his own purposes, he quite deliberately introduced his report of a dramatic version of the story. In short there seems little point in searching further for such a play. The "good effect" which Broke credited to the missing play is meant to re-enforce the sentiments expressed in his preface. No play concerning *Romeo and Juliet*, and no known version of the story does concur with them, not even Struijs's.

The multifarious dissemblances of Arthur Broke may be accounted for by a single explanation. In 1562, the year in which *Romeus and Juliet* was published, Elizabeth's disputes with the papacy suddenly flamed into fury. In January, parliament met and passed a remarkable act declaring that anyone within the realm who maintained the pope's authority by writing, printing, preaching, or teaching incurred a *praemunire* for the first offense and for the second would be held guilty of high treason, a capital crime. It further required that all in holy orders, all graduates of universities, lawyers, schoolmasters, court officers, and knights, citizens, and burgesses in parliament must take the oath of supremacy.<sup>29</sup> This legislation of itself would have been enough to make the author of *Romeus*

25. Gollancz, p. x.

26. Furness, p. 399.

27. Fuller, p. 46.

28. Porter and Clarke, p. 121.

29. Daniel Neal, "The History of the Puritans" (London, 1837), I, 119.

*and Juliet* all but despair of publishing his poem while in the Queen's service. But the months that followed brought still greater alarms. On March 1, 1562, a massacre of French Protestants took place at Vassy in France and Elizabeth joined forces with the French Huguenots in a war against the government of Charles IX.<sup>30</sup> While English troops were invading Normandy, at home the famous convocation sat. "The Thirty-nine Articles of Religion" were drawn up and all members of the English clergy were made to subscribe to them.<sup>31</sup> And on July 20, 1562, the heads of the Ecclesiastical Commission published a writ calling for vigorous inquiry into the activities of those opposed to the Crown's governance of ecclesiastical affairs. The second of fourteen items authorized the Commission "to inquire of all heresies and seditious books, and such other contrary to the laws of the realm, and the quiet government of the same."<sup>32</sup> Given these circumstances, Broke saw that the only way to get his poem into print without losing the Crown's favor was to identify it as an unremitting Protestant attack upon the detested adherents of the papacy. His translation of the Huguenot tract, *The Agreeemente of Sundry Places of Scripture*, done also at this time, probably was meant to serve no other purpose than to attest to his complete sympathy with the Protestant cause. It is not impossible, however, that this last venture was undertaken solely to qualify him for a place among the party with whom he was going to France on the Queen's business when he met his death. It hardly seems possible that he produced it as the result of some deep religious experience. All Broke's dissembling converges upon one goal—his wish to remain in favor.

Munro rises to Broke's bait when he observes: "From his deununciation of the friars and their ways in his introduction 'To the Reader,' and from his other known volume on Scripture, we may see that he was a zealous Protestant."<sup>33</sup> And that is precisely the reason for his dissembling. By presenting his work as a youthful indiscretion, he partly disowns it and hopes to make mute even the "one reproachful mouth [which] might overthrow it." By stating that the theme has been handled with an approved moral slant by another writer, he infers that the well-disposed reader may supply out of his own store of propriety the disposition necessary to read *Romeus and Juliet* as a rebuke to papists and an admonition to the indiscreet.

Sampson's response to Broke's avowals shows that he also was ready to take Broke at his most recent word. He notes that Arthur Broke is "a serious writer, as may be gathered from the highly moral address 'To the Reader,' prefixed to his poem."<sup>34</sup> Sampson, nevertheless, fails to draw any parallel between this "highly moral address" and the poem itself. Porter and Clarke, wondering about the dilemma which the preface presents, have observed: "The minds of his readers would need to consider it [the poem] through ascetic eyes in order to gather such edification from it. Since no 'loathing' of the 'beastliness' of the hero and heroine is shown, perhaps this Preface was devised to ward off Puritanic prejudice."<sup>35</sup> Rolfe goes a step farther in his suspicions. He notes:

<sup>30</sup> Henry Gee, *The Elizabethan Clergy and the Settlement of Religion, 1558-1564* (Oxford, 1898), pp. 174-175; John Lingard, *The History of England* (Edinburgh, 1902), VI, 72-86.

<sup>31</sup> Benjamin Brook, *The Lives of the Puritans* (London, 1813), I, 21.

<sup>32</sup> Gee, p. 178.

<sup>33</sup> Munro, p. xxi.

<sup>34</sup> George Sampson (ed.), *Romeo and Juliet* (Cambridge University Press, 1936), p. 16.

<sup>35</sup> Porter and Clarke, p. 122.

"That Brooke was a Puritan we may infer from the religious character of the only other book which he is known to have published."<sup>36</sup> Elsewhere Rolfe observes:

I suspect that after this poem was written he had become a Puritan—or more rigid in his Puritanism,—but nevertheless lusted after literary fame and could not resist the temptation to publish the youthful woorke.<sup>3</sup> But after writing the verse prologue it occurred to him—or some of his godly friends may have admonished him—that the character of the story and the manner in which he had treated it, needed further apology or justification; and the prose preface was written to serve as a kind of 'moral' to the production.<sup>37</sup>

While there is no special need to think that Brooke really was a Puritan, indeed his service to the court makes that an improbability, we may observe that Rolfe's surmise did not go wide of the mark. It is to be regretted that he did not pause to consider the events of that troublous year. He might then have said instead that, to avoid being charged with having papist sympathies, Brooke misled his readers about his sources and the date of the composition of his poem. He concealed his age through a vague title page and an ambiguous verse preface, and ransacked his imagination for a play that had something in common with his story, or, lacking that, even invented one. And then, he prudently wrote a prose preface to serve as a kind of moral to the production, following hard upon it with a translation of a French Protestant tract.

Thus, it would appear, we have the whole story of Arthur Brooke's dissembling. He had contrived a somewhat absurd yet necessary game to enable him to publish his poem without jeopardizing his court position. How was he to foresee that, for other reasons, later generations would be curious about his sources? He could not have known that generations of critics, troubled with vague doubts about the source of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, would look in vain for an analogue, born as a figment in the imagination of Arthur Brooke, only because he needed it to justify his position in a society from which, in four months time, he would be removed forever. Yet, we cannot judge him harshly. To have published *Romeus and Juliet* in 1562 without some dissembling would have been almost impossible. Had Brooke not published, Shakespeare might not have shown sufficient interest in the story of Romeo and Juliet to turn the matter into a play.

<sup>36</sup> Rolfe, p. 278.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 227.

## THE CURRENT THEATRE

By EUPHEMIA VAN RENSSLAER WYATT

Could it have been Alice Gerstenberg's light-hearted but meaningful *Overtones* which suggested to O'Neill the exploration of man's dual nature? After his play, *The Great God Brown* with its masks, came *Strange Interlude* without masks, but with mens' inner selves exposed, then *Days Without End* centered about John Loving's battle with his alter ego or evil genius. The general use of full-faced masks in *Lazarus Laughed* merely added a nightmarish quality to its incomprehensibility.

Half masks are now worn, on and off, by the four principal characters in *The Great God Brown*, which has not been seen since 1926, when it was produced by Macgowan, Jones, and O'Neill. It was a bafflingly uneven play then, nor has the spendid effort of the Phoenix Theatre Company under the direction of Stuart Vaughan, with striking decor by William Stevens Armstrong and a dissonant musical score by David Anram, been able to keep the cumulative power of Acts I and II from being dissipated in Acts II and IV.

*The Great God Brown*, in seven-year cycles, contrasts the lives of two men—the practical Billy Brown and Dion Anthony, an artist. As a high school graduate, Brown discovers that the girl he loves, Margaret, is infatuated with Dion. Seven years later, Brown, as a prosperous architect, offers work to the spendthrift Dion, who hides his soul behind a mask. This is the Dion whom Margaret has married. Only to the gum-chewing, loose-living Cybel does Dion show his real face. Dion and Cybel are only friends; it is Brown who keeps her. For seven years, Brown exploits the artistic genius of Dion, who has become an alcholic. Dion dies excoriating Brown, but leaves him the mask which brings with it the magic of Margaret's love.

Up to this point, the audience has been closely knit to the play, but after Brown disposes of Dion's body, he keeps changing masks so that he alternately appears as Billy or Dion, and thus, confusion mounts. Dion is hunted by the police as the murderer of Billy and Cybel suddenly becomes Cybele, the Earth Mother, and the dying Brown becomes the mouthpiece for O'Neill, the poet:

Blessed are they that weep for they shall laugh. Only  
he that has wept can laugh. The laughter of Heaven sows  
Earth with a rain of tears and the laughter of Man returns  
to play in dancing gales of flame upon the knees of God.

'Always Spring comes again bearing life,' intones Cybele,  
'Spring bearing the intolerable chalice of life again—  
bearing the glorious blazing crown of life again.'

'Well, what's his name?' asks the Police Captain.

'Man,' returns Cybel.  
'How d'yuh spell it?'

Stuart Vaughan places full emphasis on symbolism. Instead of the suggested realism of O'Neill's first scene on the pier near a casino, the curtain rises on the Brown and Anthony families in the frozen-attitude tableau that is now the hall mark of impressionism, which reaches its climax with Cybel as Cybele standing over Brown, in the green leaves of a faun or satyr, stretched ritualistically on a monument! The epilogue suggests the same strikingly-effective set as the prologue—an iron pier near a casino—where Margaret has come to the dance with her sons. It is here that Dion first kissed her, and she holds tight to her heart the mask of the husband she never really knew.

Although T. S. Eliot was able to contain the incongruities of the knights stepping out of their parts in *Murder In The Cathedral*, O'Neill's ideas become too complex, and the cleavage between Paganism and Christianity too hazy, to offer any continuum for the Earth Mother scene, which Mr. Vaughan's classical staging seems to push further out of context. None of this is the fault of the company, of which Fritz Weaver's Dion and Robert Lansing's Brown deserve warm recognition, along with Nan Martin (formerly Mrs. J. B.) and Gerry Jedd as Cybel. O'Neill missed fire in *The Great God Brown* but he did so with a reckless genius.

Since the poetry of Shakespeare could have had no lovelier nor wiser tribute paid to it than by Sir John Gielgud's *Ages of Man* last season, it is not surprising that his production of *Much Ado About Nothing* should have lyric lightness. Sir John, who declares that this is his last appearance as Benedick, has curiously enough never played it with the same Beatrice. Fortunately for us, Miss Margaret Leighton now seems the incomparable one. Her Beatrice is a highborn lady, mettlesome but not ill natured; her verbal barbs, spiced with wit not scandal; her grace, as enchanting as her gaiety. Sir John's Benedick is a gentleman, a wit, and a popular officer, who is more apt to make fun of himself than his friends. Sir John is most apt in his comedy. The broader humor of Dogberry is brought out to great advantage by George Rose of the Old Vic Company. In a delightfully preposterous Italian costume, Dogberry gives a close-up of the staunch English constable who is addicted to muddling his vocabulary. Michael MacLiammoir is a very friendly Don Pedro.

The whole production is shot through with the brightness of Renaissance splendor and the sunniness of good nature. Sir John has little sympathy with the current fashion of transposing the period in Shakespearean productions. This makes it particularly interesting to compare his *Much Ado* with the Canadian and American production of 1957 and 1958.

In the Canadian *Much Ado* at Stratford, Ontario, the setting for the comedy was still Messina, Sicily, but it was Messina of the 1880's, where a certain warm and intimate quality was injected by the sight of the Governor's household with its liveried footmen and maids in starched caps and aprons, rushing about with the luggage of Don Pedro and his staff back from the front. Hero and Beatrice, very chic in their bustles, were so busy with their preparations for

the Officers Ball that Beatrice appeared in an apron for one of her encounters with Benedick. The Governor and his brother, in frock coats, were charming old gentlemen who made good comedy of their challenge to Claudio—a scene eliminated by Sir John. Christopher Plummer's Benedick dominated the stage, a handsome and rather sardonic hussar; Miss Eileen Herlie as Beatrice was sprightly.

At Stratford, Connecticut in 1958, *Much Ado* was given a Spanish background on a ranch in Colonial Texas, which did very little for the play except to provide a colorful background of music and Indian servitors and a long porch which was convenient for eavesdropping. There was a tendency to farce the comedy, especially when Miss Hepburn hid under a table. She and Alfred Drake were at their best in the church where their love scene was melodramatically played.

No melodramatic whisper is permitted in the Gielgud production where even Don Juan, so roundly villainous at both Stratfords, is toned down to a melancholy meddler by Hurd Hatfield in New York. Costumes and decor by Mariano Andreu are richly imaginative and ingenious.

No augur for beauty on Broadway, Shakespeare is now overlaid by a welter of political biographies, emphasized at the first Drama Desk lunch at Sardi's where the press met the theater and where the guests included: Harry Golden, editor; Robert E. Lee and Jerome Lawrence who have dramatized Golden's *Only In America* and are authors of *The Gang's All Here*; and George Abbott and Jerome Weidman who are collaborating on a musical about Mayor La-Guardia called *Fiorello*.

One of these political biographies, *The Gang's All Here*, is a sensational satire on a small town editor, Griffith P. Hastings, who is shoved into the White House by his political cronies. They promptly betray his trust in them. Melvyn Douglas, who surpasses himself in the role of Hastings, appears as the replica of a former president—Warren Gamaliel Harding. The authors freely admit that they have made use of an historical foundation and feel at liberty to use as many fictional characters as necessary in their study of political corruption. But is there not some ethical problem involved in mixing fiction and fact to the point of branding a President with a suicide which has never been proved? It observes the historical fact that Charles E. Hughes, Herbert Hoover, and Andrew Mellon, along with the venal Senator Fall and the Attorney General Daugherty (both later indicted), were in Harding's Cabinet. In the play Hastings gives further appointments to his old pals. The most naive appointment is the naming of an acquaintance met on a cruise, as head of the Veterans Bureau. The appointees, both factual and fictional, ended up in gaol. The play is fast, funny, and almost pathetic; acted with gusto by Melvyn Douglas, Jean Dixon, E. G. Marshall, Paul McGrath, and Clay Hall. Poor Harding! Who remembers that he personally persuaded U. S. Steel to shorten their working day from twelve to eight hours?

Blackfriars is offering one of their most finished productions in Mauriac's *Les Mal Aimes*, known in English as *The Egoist*, psychologically intricate, but very interesting.

## DRAMA BOOKSHELF

THE CLASSIC THEATRE: VOLUME THREE, SIX SPANISH PLAYS. Edited by Eric Bentley. New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1959; pp. 507. \$1.45.

Since each of the three great theatres—the Greek, the Elizabethan and the seventeenth-century French—reached its peak during a period of intense nationalism, it is not surprising that sixteenth-century Spain, an age of conquest and adventure, should also produce great literature. The third volume of Classic Theatre includes six plays, three of which are excellent examples of drama in the "golden age" while the others reflect Mr. Bentley's somewhat esoteric taste.

Although interesting as literature which combines elements of both the medieval and renascence periods in Spain, and as a study in realism, *Celestina* by Fernando de Rojas does not properly belong in the classic theatre. This stylistically beautiful transition piece is not a play but a dramatic novel. One wonders why it was included in the collection when several other works would more accurately represent the period. Both Mark Singleton of the University of Wisconsin and Leslie Byrd Simpson of the University of California have brought out translations of *Celestina* that are vastly superior to this one by James Mabbe.

*The Siege of Numantia* is a second puzzling choice. Based on one of the famous sieges of history, it demonstrates a noble and cultured style together with the fulsome patriotic sentiments that reflect the intense nationalism of the period. However, a basic requirement for good drama, classic or otherwise, is that it come alive in the theatre and this play would be almost impossible to produce. As a playwright, Cervantes is more important historically than dramatically; he was wise to rest his fame on the enduring merits of *Don Quixote* and *Novelas Ejemplares*.

However, Mr. Bentley hits pay-dirt with *Fuente Ovejuna* (*The Sheep Well*) by Lope de Vega, a man who epitomized the color, excitement, energy, and limitations of sixteenth-century Spain. In addition to his many love-affairs and adventures as a soldier and sailor, he wrote approximately two thousand plays, some religious works, numerous lyrics and an autobiography. One can understand why Cervantes called him a "monster of nature." *Fuente Ovejuna*, one of his best plays, depicts the struggle of the peasants against the overlords and achieves the proportions of mass drama. In commenting on this play John Gassner wrote: "Hailed by Russia as the first proletarian play, this remarkable work has such a plentitude of passion, characterization and local color that it has been acclaimed with equal enthusiasm by the London TIMES and the Moscow NEWS." *The King of the Greatest Alcalde*, is another of Lope's plays that might well have been included in this collection. However, in spite of his great talent, Lope de Vega neither plumbed the depths nor scaled the heights, but, because of his tremendous output, remained to the end a colorful but superficial playwright.

Although our modern conception of the character is based on the nine-

teenth-century romantic drama of Jose Zorrilla, Tirso de Molina's *The Trickster of Seville* is important because it introduced Don Juan to the world and gave rise to a considerable body of literature in the subject. Tirso, a priest, who held several high offices in the Mercedarian Order, intended to teach a moral lesson about the sin of presumption but, in addition, managed to write a pretty interesting play. It is fascinating to compare this work with his *El Condenado Por Desconfia* (*The Double Damned*), which deals with the sin of despair.

Calderon, considered by most critics as the greatest playwright of the golden age, was a philosopher by nature. He was more thoughtful, sensible and refined than his "swaggering predecessor," Lope, and, one might add, frequently less interesting. *Love After Death* is the story of the Moorish insurrection and the Alpujarra siege. Although many of the speeches have unusual rhythmic and lyrical qualities, the play is mediocre and is seldom included in collections of Calderon's works or discussed at length by critics of the period. Calderon's widely recognized social drama, *The Mayor of Zalamea*, would have been a wiser choice for a collection such as this.

The final play in the volume is far more representative of Calderon than *Love After Death*. Probably his best known play, *Life Is a Dream* is a philosophical drama with psychological overtones; it also contains some of his most beautiful lyric poetry. Although Calderon lacks the zest and theatricality of Lope, his influence on European drama, though not always good, was tremendous.

With the exception of *Celestina*, the translation of the plays in this collection is the work of the late Roy Campbell. Since this reviewer is not competent to make a judgment in this department, the matter was referred to a Professor of Spanish who had specialized in the literature of the golden age. It was her opinion that the translation is mediocre and fails to capture the sweep, grandeur, and lyric beauty of the original works.

Although this collection may appeal to those who are interested in theatre history, it is doubtful that it will generate much enthusiasm for Spanish drama among students. The fact that a work makes an interesting radio script for BBC does not necessarily qualify it for inclusion into the ranks of Classic Theatre.

Sister M. Gregory, O.P.  
*Rosary College, River Forest*

**REVOLUTION IN THE THEATRE: CONCLUSIONS CONCERNING THE MUNICH ARTISTS' THEATRE.** By Georg Fuchs. Translated by C. C. Kuhn. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1959; pp. xxx + 220. \$4.75.

Among the many promises and hopes for civilization gone glimmering in the carnage of consecutive and sweeping world wars was the place—and the concept—known as the Munich Artists' Theatre. In 1908, it was to rise in the approximate geographic center of Europe as a headquarters and a haven for all those most responsible for the emergence of a genuine dramatic art from the shallow theatics of the late nineteenth century. Goethe's lofty vision of the perfect fusion of thorough-going German technological skills and the

daring dreams of its poets in one dynamic house were to be fulfilled here. Brahm, Meiningen, Reinhardt, whose previous institutions were formal competitors, were now to be given space and time for experimentation. Here was to be found clear and final proof to the literati that the theatre and not the library is the proper home of the Greeks, Shakespeare, Moliere, and others of similar stature. Then the pettiness of the Kaiser's patriotism and politics and the nightmare of Nazism slowed, stalled, and silenced the grand intention. It was not until 1945 that the spiritual design could find encouragement and opportunity to match the splendour of the physical plant. Thus, the rebuilding and the regeneration of an ideal goes on.

A recent translation by Constance Connor Kuhn of *Revolution in the Theatre* is, at once, the journal, blueprint, and declaration of ideals of this turbulent transitional period in the theatrical and artistic history of Western Man. It is fascinating reading about an era that demands the attention of every serious student of drama. Unfortunately, it is not really a story of the Munich Artists' Theatre, chronologically and systematically told; it is, as the sub-title correctly proclaims, a series of recollections. This makes much of it seem random, inconclusive, sometimes sentimentally subjective. But the style is refreshingly of that prior century when a love of art and beauty could be effusive and unashamed. The matter of the memoirs is always of interest to anyone who believes, as Georg Fuchs so surely did, that what happens on a stage is meant to be better than a business and more than a pastime.

James P. Foote  
*Mercy College, Detroit*

**ACT ONE.** By Moss Hart. New York: Random House, 1959; pp. 444. \$5.00

Whether or not you are a devotee of theatre, you cannot afford to miss *Act One*. Although Moss Hart's plays are, for the most part, second rate, his autobiography is top-drawer and in no way resembles the professionally clever, slick, egotistical biographies that have been flooding the book-stalls during recent years. On the contrary, it is one of the most satisfying, ebullient, brilliantly written books of this or any other season! It is obvious that Mr. Hart knows and loves words because he makes them jump through literary hoops at will. He can be sharply amusing, quietly devastating, wryly ironic, or compassionately tender. He is incredibly objective as he looks at his life with a playwright's insight and stages it for the reader with a director's flair for the dramatic.

Early in life Hart, a sensitive and stubborn child, determined to escape from the grinding poverty into which he was born. The El Dorado upon which he sets his sights was Broadway; the struggle to reach that promised land is the story he tells in *Act One*. It is frustrating to determine which facets of this absorbing book to stress for purposes of a review because each is a perfect gem. Mr. Hart's picture of a little boy escaping from the ugliness of reality, via matinees in the Bronx Opera House, is touching; life in a summer camp revealed from the vantage point of the social director, hilarious; his experiences as office-boy to Augustus Pitou, Jr., amazing; and the saga of writing and producing *Once in a Lifetime*, enlightening and entertaining. Rarely has a book so brilliantly revealed the complexity and grandeur of the theatre and the drudgery and dedication it demands of its followers. "The world of the

theatre," Mr. Hart writes, "is as closed a tribe and as far removed from other civilized worlds as a gypsy encampment, and those who enter it are spoiled for anything else and are tainted with its insidious lure for the rest of their lives."

Moss Hart's superb gift for characterization was a source of delight to this reviewer. His tyrannical grandfather and remarkable Aunt Kate are but two of the fascinating people he brings to life—characters much more colorful and dramatic than any he created for the stage. The vignette of his collaborator, the taciturn George Kaufman, is faultless and, at the moment, is probably a conversation piece in theatrical circles.

*Act One* has a magnificent "curtain," more exciting than can be found in many a current Broadway offering. If Mr. Hart attempts to "top" it in the future, he is likely to have a more difficult time than he did with the exasperating second and third acts of *Once in a Lifetime*. If all this sounds a bit more like a valentine than a review, read *Act One* and the odds are about one hundred to one that you will hasten to join the ever-swelling chorus of cheers!

Sister M. Gregory, O.P.  
Rosary College, River Forest

WISE FOOLS IN SHAKESPEARE. By Robert Hillis Goldsmith with An Introduction by Oscar James Campbell. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1958; pp. xi+123. \$3.50.

Upon publication of each new article or book about Shakespeare one cannot but wonder: can it ever end? During the past several centuries, the world of letters has produced studies ranging from textual exegeses (including "exegeses" even of paper types and printing faces of the various editions) to psychoanalyses of Shakespeare himself, appreciations, denunciations, critiques, and denials that the author is the author. Fortunately for literary and dramatic scholarship, the inexhaustibility of Shakespeare's works has, in *Wise Fools in Shakespeare*, been excellently demonstrated. Mr. Goldsmith has produced a book with scope and depth.

*Wise Fools in Shakespeare* is concerned with four of the wise and witty successors to the medieval "fools artificial": Feste, Lavache, Lear's Fool, and Touchstone. "Fools artificial," the author carefully indicates, are neither natural fools (dwarfs or idiots) nor humorous Vices (e.g., John Heywood's *Merrie-Report*). The freedom of the natural fool "to indulge in wanton talk, truth-telling, and parody proved an incentive strong enough to enlist many perfectly sane men in the ranks of counterfeit fools." Possibly, as early as the twelfth century, a distinction was being drawn between such natural fools, merely ludicrous entertainers, and "fools artificial," who were the licensed critics of their masters and fellows and were, thereby, able to speak unwelcome truths with relative impunity. The humorous Vices, such as *Merrie-Report* in "Play of the Wether," had much in common with the "fools artificial" insofar as the former were witty and ironical, and often acted as commentators upon the action of other characters in the interludes. But the later wise and witty fool—developed for the stage out of the "fools artificial"—differs funda-

mentally from the comic Vice: "he does not merely stand in the wings of the stage and wink at the audience. Try to imagine *As You Like It* without Touchstone or *Twelfth Night* without Feste, and you have some measure of the fool's importance. By his very presence, Shakespeare's wise fool alters the tone and the meaning of the play of which he is a part."

The primary function of the wise fool in Shakespeare, then, is to act as a somewhat detached observer who is not irrelevant to the theme of the play. Whereas the clown as a stage character had no thematic significance, but existed to excite laughter without functional pertinence, the fool's chief role is to afford means whereby the audience can at once laugh at his simple antics and, more important, have their critical faculties oriented and directed by the author. That the fool is wise, moreover, cannot be doubted. Learned in "clothes philosophy," the fool can perceive beyond illusory surfaces to the essentials of the other characters. Touchstone notes the peevishness and self-pity underlying Jaques' affected malancholy, and Feste points out that cowls do not make monks nor do suits of motley make fools. Similarly, Lear's Fool, as the author observes, is "nobody's fool . . . It is his task with his probing, sometimes caustic comments to cut away the cataracts of illusion which cloud Lear's eyes."

*Wise Fools in Shakespeare*, carefully written, founded upon judicious scholarship, is a book which deserves attention from all students of Shakespeare and of the theatre in general. As Dr. Campbell remarks in the introduction of this work: "If actors cast in the role would read the book, they might learn how to present the figure more nearly as Shakespeare conceived it. When that happy day arrives, no one need continue to regard the Fool and his business with aversion or mere tolerance."

Austin J. Shelton  
Mercy College, Detroit

## INDEX TO VOLUME TWO

|  | Page         |
|--|--------------|
| <b>CANFIELD, F. Curtis.</b>  |              |
| Theatre: the History, the Literature, the<br>Criticism. <i>The Path</i> .....              | 8            |
| <b>CASPER, Leonard.</b> Mirror for Mobs: the<br>Willie Stark Stories .....                 | 120          |
| <b>DICKINSON, Donald Hugh.</b> The Two Queens in <i>Hamlet</i> .....                       | 106          |
| <b>DRAMA BOOKSHELF</b> .....   | 42, 79, 141  |
| <b>DUGAN, John T.</b>  |              |
| Theatre: the History, the Literature,<br>the Criticism. <i>The Source</i> .....            | 5            |
| <b>DUPREY, Richard A.</b> A Reassessment of Henri Gheon .....                              | 72           |
| <b>HARTKE, Gilbert V., O.P.</b>  |              |
| Theatre: the History, the Literature, the<br>Criticism. <i>The Vision</i> .....            | 13           |
| <b>HUMMERT, Paul E.</b> Bernard Shaw's <i>On the Rocks</i> .....                           | 34           |
| <b>McALEER, John J.</b> Arthur Broke: Elizabethan Dissembler .....                         | 131          |
| <b>MAGUIRE, C. E., R.S.C.J.</b> The Divine Background .....                                | 18           |
| <b>MAHONEY, John L.</b> Robert Cox and the Seventeenth-<br>Century Drolls .....            | 68           |
| <b>N.C.T.C. CONTACT PLACEMENT</b> .....  | 47, 102, 150 |
| <b>N.C.T.C. DIRECTORÝ, May 1959</b> .....  | 81           |
| <b>ROSELIEP, Raymond.</b> The Poetry Recital .....   | 125          |
| <b>SHELTON, Austin J.</b> Speech and Drama in Catholic<br>Colleges and Universities .....  | 50           |
| <b>STAPLETON, Gabriel, S.D.S.</b> Future Imperative<br>for the Catholic Drama Critic ..... | 2            |
| <b>WASSMER, Thomas A., S.J.</b> Reason and Faith as<br>Seen by Graham Greene .....         | 126          |
| <b>WYATT, Enphemia Van Rensselaer.</b> The Current Theatre .....                           | 141          |

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